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Syrian refugees experience one of Canada's snowiest pastimes

metroNEWS

SLIDING RIGHT INTO THINGS

Hamzeh enjoyed his first sledding experience on Sunday afternoon. JEREMY SIMES/FOR METRO

Pedestrians prioritized

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

City report sets out ways to improve walking safety

Brodie Thomas
Metro | Calgary

The City of Calgary could soon adopt a goal of zero pedestrian fatalities.

For Coun. Druh Farrell, that goal can't come quickly enough and a report going to council committee on Wednesday should take the city one step closer.

"We have studies and strategies on every mode and mobility in the city — except pedestrians," said Farrell. "We didn't know what motivated Calgarians to get out and walk."

The report, titled Step Forward: A Strategic Plan for Improving Walking in Calgary, comes in at nearly 100 pages and lists 50 recommendations to improve walking safety in the city.

Farrell hopes the city gets started immediately on simple things such as installing sidewalks in areas of high pedestrian traffic that have none.

"There are some easy fixes we can start with — but I'd like to see it embedded in our operational and capital budgets like we would every other transportation mode," she said.

The report also sets out six objectively measured results, in hopes of getting more Calgarians walking. Those results include achieving fewer pedestrian injures and fatalities, and getting more children walking.

Farrell said we have to stop accepting pedestrian fatalities as a natural part of city life, which is why she wants to see the target of zero deaths.

"It's a lofty goal, but no other objective is acceptable," said Farrell.

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Your essential daily news

Rising price of cauliflower causing problems for restaurants. **Business**

TRANSIT

A sneak peek at the 'Mask' CTrain cars

Helen Pike
Metro | Calgary

Calgary Transit unveiled a swanky new CTrain car Friday, known as the S200 or the "Mask," the first of 63 new cars from Siemens Canada set to roll out.

But before you jump from your seat, the first full train won't hit the tracks until the spring — so here's a sneak peek.

Of the 63 new Mask cars on order for the city, 28 will be replacing older U2 model cars that have been in service for 34 years and are nearing the end of their lifespan.

Each car costs around $3.2 million and is fully accessible.

Among the new features are smooth bench seats — unlike the old ones with the posterior-imprint shapes, which Mayor Naheed Nenshi pointed out "fit no human being's bum" — and doors that light up green when they can be opened and red when closing.

$3.2M
The cost of each new CTrain car

The cars have new features, such as doors that light up green when they can be opened and red when closing. HELEN PIKE/METRO

In the year since Sam Dyck helped reinvigorate the Gay-Straight Alliance — now the Queer-Straight Alliance — at Forest Lawn High School, the school has become very inclusive, Dyck said. AARON CHATHA/METRO

Striking change in school atmosphere

LGBTQ ISSUES

Queer-Straight Alliance leader no longer fears to walk halls

Aaron Chatha
Metro | Calgary

A year ago, on the verge of dropping out of school, Sam Dyck made a decision with his friends to reinvigorate the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) at Forest Lawn High School.

At the time, Dyck, a Grade 11 transgender student, told Metro there was a period when he didn't feel safe walking down the halls, being in the classroom or going to the washroom.

Now the Forest Lawn GSA has been renamed the QSA — Queer-Straight Alliance — to be more inclusive and the general atmosphere in the school has undergone a drastic change.

"School is very inclusive," said Dyck, now in Grade 12. "You don't hear as many homophobic or transphobic slurs anymore. People are generally accepting, and teachers are on top of any bullying that happens."

> **"The steps that are being taken are exactly what's needed."**
> Sam Dyck

Dyck said he's happy to see change not only in his school but through the province as well, with the release of guidelines by Alberta Education last week to help school boards create policies to protect LGBTQ students from discrimination.

"The steps that are being taken are exactly what's needed," he said. "I love the guidelines. I think it helps students feel safer and more comfortable at school and helps lessen any discrimination that may happen."

Dyck said it will make a big impact on concerns around washrooms and change rooms. The guidelines place emphasis on creating safe and inclusive spaces, which will allow students to access washrooms congruent with their gender identity.

Last year, Dyck and the alliance launched a social-media campaign called #SafeAB, which was aimed at spreading awareness and support for GSAs.

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Energy education for average Joe

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Group aims to bring facts to debate on climate change

Lucie Edwardson
Metro | Calgary

The Energy Education team, Jacqueline Williams, Kailyn Stenhouse, Jason Donev and Jordan Hanania. LUCIE EDWARDSON / METRO

Conversations about energy and climate are often fueled by passion, rather than fact.

Professor Jason Donev from the University of Calgary and his Energy Education team aim to change that by bringing fact based conversation to the forefront when it comes to discussions around energy.

"People who're talking about climate often don't know a whole lot about energy," said Donev. "And, the people who are talking about energy often don't know a whole lot about energy."

Donev said energy is a thorny subject, clouded with misconceptions and opinions, but fact based conversations can happen if appropriate resources are made available, which is why he began Energy Education.

"This subject becomes a whole lot more complicated the more you look into it, so we wanted to provide as factually driven, complete picture as possible," he said.

The website, energyeducation.ca was started in 2013 by Donev and a few students, and now boasts more than 800 pages of information, info graphics and more.

"As people know more about the intricacies of this they want to have a more in-depth conversation," said Donev.

His team now consists of three current students who help Donev write pages, create info graphics and other multi-media components for the site.

Third year physics major Kailyn Stenhouse said the website can help generate fact-driven discussions about all kinds of energy.

"There are a lot of misconceptions about energy and when you talk to people one way or the other they are very opinionated," she said. "To just clarify things for people and present it in a simple way that is understandable is very important."

Jacqueline Williams, a third year astrophysics major said the website is also written and presented in a way that anyone can understand.

"You don't need to have an energy science degree to understand what's being said," she said. "Usually if there is a topic on the page where you don't know some words there is often a link on that word that takes you to an explanation, so you can really understand better what you're reading."

The website is currently being used as a textbook in Donev's Energy for Everyone class, as well as at the University of British Columbia and at York University. Anyone can access the materials free of charge.

Jordan Hanania, third year physics student, said he thinks the site can help curb some heated conversations. "It's not that people don't know anything about energy, but if they access a resource like this, their information would be a lot more well-rounded."

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SYRIAN REFUGEE KIDS

Joyful first go at tobogganing

Jeremy Simes
For Metro | Calgary

Zainab pondered the hill before she went for it.
JEREMY SIMES / FOR METRO

Though she can't speak for her friends, Zainab said she wasn't cold.

It felt like -23 C Sunday afternoon with the windchill and, to the surprise of many, about 35 Syrian refugee children bundled up with crazy carpets in hand.

There was some nervous chatter among them as they made their way up to the toboggan hill but, as soon as they were at the top, nobody hesitated — they just went for it.

Some tried to ride the slippery sleds like snowboards and, unsuccessfully, tumbled down the slope.

Others decided to sled backwards. Some went in groups. But, ultimately, all that could be heard that afternoon were howls of joy.

It's the first time these Syrian kids left their group home in Bridgeland to enjoy a favourite Canadian pastime: tobogganing.

"My heart is very happy," Zainab, 11, said, via translation from Saba Amro, who was volunteering with Calgary Catholic Immigration Services (CCIS).

Mohammed, 13, said he felt pretty powerful going down the hill.

"He just felt like he was happy," Amro said, adding the outing was extremely fun for all the kids.

"They've got snow on their faces and they don't care," she said. "They knew what to do."

Mark and Carmen Vazquez-Mackay co-ordinated the tobogganing day.

In fact, CCIS has been incredibly busy ever since Syrian refugees have been entering the city, Mark said.

So, he and Carmen took it upon themselves to make the event happen, with the approval of CCIS and the kids' parents.

"It was such a perfect opportunity," he said. "They've been through a lot coming here. And so I think doing something as simple as this just kind of takes their minds off things and enjoy the simple things we do everyday."

For Amro, the day was extremely special.

"It's pretty amazing," she said, as tears began to well in her eyes. "People can find resiliency — especially in kids — and get out and enjoy themselves. It's something really simple."

One of 5 simple ways to end the stigma around mental illness.

It's not always easy to know how to break the stigma associated with mental illness. Mental health experts suggest 5 easy ways you can help. Here's one way.

Be kind

Small acts of kindness, such as a get-well card or an invitation to coffee, can mean a lot to someone who is struggling with a mental illness. Ask yourself how you would want to be treated if you had a serious illness and use that as your guide

Serena Ryder

Bell Let's Talk

Learn more at bell.ca/letstalk.

BY THE NUMBERS

Pedestrian Strategy

The city's new pedestrian strategy contains a wealth of data on what's keeping people from walking. Like other cities, Calgary may adopt a Vision Zero goal of no pedestrian fatalities.

Brodie Thomas
Metro | Calgary

31 km

Length of sidewalk replaced each year by the city.

$2.5M

Needed to deliver short-term strategy actions.

$22M

Amount spent annually on pedestrian facilities maintenance.

Top 5

THINGS CALGARIANS SAID WOULD GET THEM WALKING MORE

5. Make it easier to cross the street
4. Address gaps in networks
3. More walkable destinations
2. Better lighting
1. Clear ice and snow from sidewalks

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Anatomy of an exhibit

BODY WORLDS

Controversial display uses real plasticized cadavers

Brodie Thomas
Metro | Calgary

Body Worlds is back in Calgary for the second time in a decade, and organizers hope it will draw 100,000 to Telus Spark in the next few months,

The fascinating and sometimes controversial display features plasticized human cadavers, intricately displayed to show anatomical features below the skin.

Cassondra Dickin, communications specialist with Telus Spark, said the Body Worlds brand is very reputable, and all of the bodies displayed have been donated with the intent of being put on display.

"There are 15,000 on the body donor registry worldwide, and 30 from Alberta who have signed up," said Dickin.

The last time Body Worlds was on display in Calgary, it was six years ago at the old science centre.

"That was Body Worlds and the Brain," said Dickin, who added this display is titled Body Worlds Vital and features examples of physical activity. The show is meant to emphasize health and wellness.

One display has a gymnast on a pommel horse, while another shows a person kicking a soccer ball.

Dickin said the idea is to show people, and kids, the connection between a healthy body and a healthy brain.

Paul Duncalf brought his children, aged 12 and 9.

"I think it gives them an insight, especially from a health-conscious point of view," he said. "This is what a smoker's lung looks like, so you shouldn't do this."

Duncalf said they understood that what they were seeing were real cadavers that had been treated and preserved.

> **We want to provide that learning opportunity.**
> Cassondra Dickin

"It's hard to relate these were once real people as well, but from an educational standpoint I think it's fascinating."

Dickin said there are no age restrictions on the Body Worlds show, but there is a lot of information about what people will see as they progress through the display.

One section that contains examples of human fetuses provides plenty of warning in advance and is easy to bypass.

"We don't want to censor – we want to provide that learning opportunity," said Dickin.

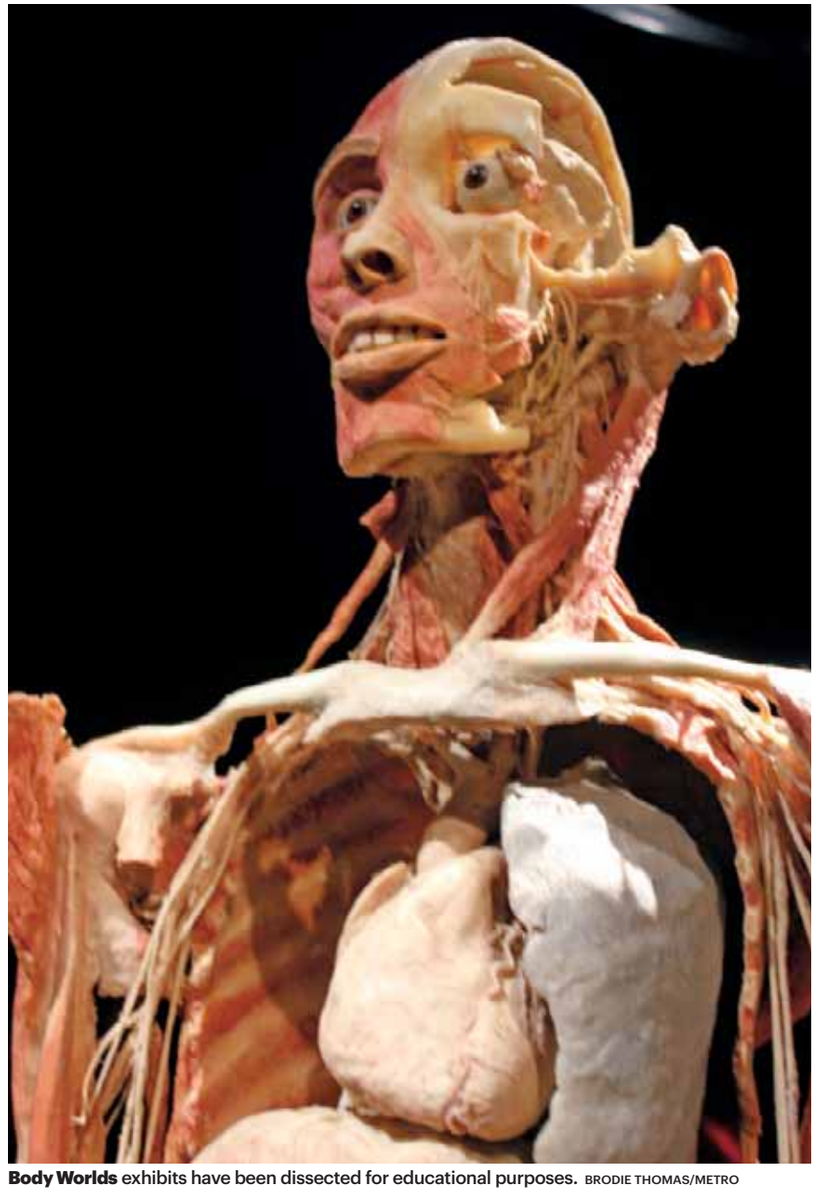
Another part of the display is closed to the public, except on Thursday nights. That display features two cadavers posed in the act of sexual intercourse.

She said that display is for adults only, or for children accompanied by adults.

"Just like all the other vitality elements in the exhibition, sex is a part of life," said Dickin. "We wanted to make it available for people to see and learn about from a very scientific point of view."

NEED TO KNOW

Body Worlds Vitality runs at Telus Spark until May 31. There will be extended hours in February.



Body Worlds exhibits have been dissected for educational purposes. BRODIE THOMAS/METRO

MARLBOROUGH

Aircraft noise irks residents

Aaron Chatha
Metro | Calgary

The noise of airplanes passing over Calgary councillor Ray Jones' home is loud enough that it rattles his china cabinet.

"When they fly over – I swear to God – you're sitting on your deck in the summer time and you can almost count the rivets on the bottom of the plane," he said.

This isn't a new issue for Jones, or the residents of Marlborough, but the Marlborough Community Association has partnered with the Calgary Airport Authority and Nav Canada to hold a community meeting on Jan. 20. It will address what the community association calls an overwhelming amount of community feedback and concern.

Jones said a slight deviation in the flight paths would move the routes over commercial areas – and greatly reduce the complaints from residents.

Jody Moseley, Calgary Airport Authority spokeswoman, said the planes already deviate when possible.

Moseley said when the airport's parallel runway system was created, aircraft needed to make a 15-degree turn, to avoid any drift which would create safety concerns. Feedback from a community consultants committee, with members from Marlborough, has led aircraft to make only 10 -degree turns when possible, to avoid residential areas.

"Now, it doesn't mean they can always do that," she said.

Moseley said the airport authority looks at any option to get aircraft away from residents, but adds that sometimes, it's unavoidable.

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PROVINCIAL TRANSGENDER POLICY

Mom 'heartbroken' by bishop's words

Lucie Edwardson
Metro | Calgary

A mother of a transgender child attending an Edmonton Catholic school said she's "heartbroken" by Bishop Frederick Henry's statements about new LGBTQ guidelines released by the minister of education.

The mother, who Metro previously interviewed when she and the Edmonton Catholic school board's disagreements over her transgender daughter became public, asked to remain anonymous to protect her child's identity.

She said she wasn't surprised by the bishop's comments, but said they still struck a chord.

The mother said figures like Bishop Henry have strong opinions in school boards, but said in these cases of human and civil rights, they shouldn't.

"They've never been told no before," she said. "This is the first time that they've really been challenged and the first time they've been told, 'You aren't a part of this decision making process.'"

Jan Buterman, president of the Trans Equality Society of Alberta, said the bishop's statement is harsh but also scientifically unfounded.

"There aren't just two poles of humanity," he said. "Intersex people really do exist, they may not be trans, but the point is we know scientifically that his statement is absolutely false."

Buterman is a trans-man fired as a substitute teacher with the Greater St. Alberta Catholic Schools in 2008 for having a sex change.

The mother said her daughter, who is in third grade, continues to attend Catholic school where she has no problems with her peers.

"Personally if it were up to me I would transfer her to the public system," she said. "But is it fair to uproot her from her friends she's had since she could walk?"

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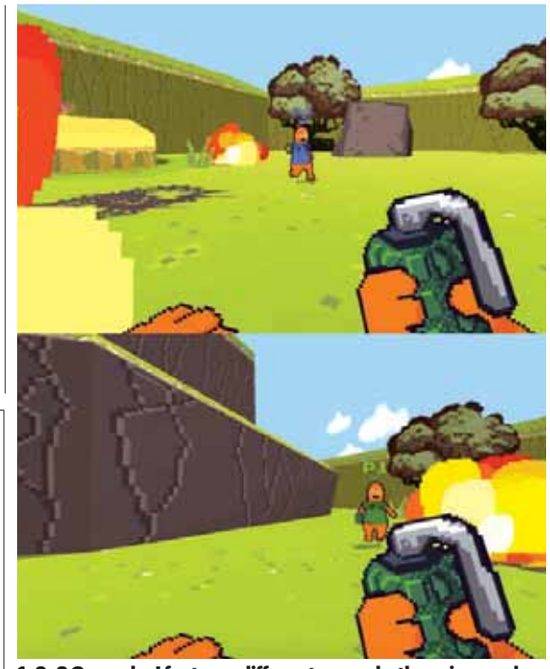


1..2..3 Grenades! features different grenade-throwing modes and grenade types. Highlights include giant grenades, cluster grenades and freeze grenades. COURTESY KYLE RECZEK

New game a real blast

GAME DEVELOPMENT

Man goes from oil and gas to entertainment

Aaron Chatha
Metro | Calgary

You have a grenade. Your opponent has a grenade. And there might be two other people near by — both, also armed with grenades.

When you're pinned in a corner, things are looking bad. But when the pins are out — then it's game over, man.

Unless you have a freeze grenade, in which case you might get the chance to run away.

1..2..3 Grenades! is the brainchild of Kyle Reczek, who has been working on the first-person perspective game since May 2015.

It was at that time Reczek decided to leave his job in the oil and gas field — during a year where many were clamouring to find a position in the sector — and pursue a calling in game development.

> **I want to take a run for it and try and do this.**
> Kyle Reczek

"It got to the point where I thought, I want to take a run for it and try and do this," he said. "This is my passion."

Having honed his skills by learning programming as a hobby, Reczek sat down for a gruelling week of programming and churned out a prototype for his booming foray into the world of game development.

He tested the game at the 2015 Indie Game Bash, where Reczek said it received a great reception — enough that he's committed himself to working full-time on game development since then. Going from oil and gas to game development doesn't mean Reczek's workload has decreased however.

"You're basically running a business in addition to creating a software product," he said. "In my case I'm doing music, art, programming, marketing and all this stuff. It's a lot of hats to wear, but it's a good challenge."

The game is currently on Steam Greenlight, a market software where fans can vote for games they like. To follow progress on 1..2..3 Grenades! watch Reczek's Twitter @savethejets.

COOL CHOIR

The sweet sounds of amateurs

Jeremy Simes
For Metro | Calgary

There's nothing that sounds sweeter than an inexperienced choral group belting harmoniously, according to Jamie Serafi.

By forming Cool Choir, Serafi's adding an edge to city's choral scene — the organization aims to connect the city's shower-singers to create a rockin' and poppin' choral group.

"It's for people who would never imagine themselves part of a choir — they think if they sing, they will clam up and go blue," Serafi said. "But it doesn't matter — everybody sings. Everybody hums while they hoover or sings while they're cleaning."

Serafi — originally from the U.K. — launched similar collectives in London and, as it turns out, they were massive successes.

"There were over 300 people who told me they couldn't sing (in the U.K.)," he said. "But six months later, they were recording albums, they were performing in professional venues and live bands … they were having profound life-changing experiences and proving their friends wrong."

Serafi said Cool Choir is meant to be more than just about the music — it's a place for people to make friends and, generally, let off steam.

"We'll do Queen, Adele, Guns and Roses, the Beatles and more."

REHEARSALS

Members will meet at the Inglewood Community Association on Wednesday and Marda Loop on Thursday. Rehearsals begin at 7 p.m. More info can be found at coolchoir.com.

Fans flock to new arena

OPEN HOUSE OFFERS LOOK INSIDE OILERS' FUTURE HOME

Ryan Tumilty
Metro | Edmonton

Freezing temperatures weren't enough to keep thousands of Oilers fans from checking out the team's new barn Saturday, with less than nine months of construction left.

The open house event at the downtown arena allowed fans to take in both the main arena and the community rink, which are both set to open this September.

Fan Kyle Bishop said he was happy to line up for the arena.

"We are super excited for it to be done, so it's nice to see they're making some solid progress," he said. "Rexall is great and it has a lot of history, but it's pretty outdated so it will be nice to have some modern amenities."

David Woodruff and his friends aren't big hockey fans, but he said he wanted to see the big project for himself.

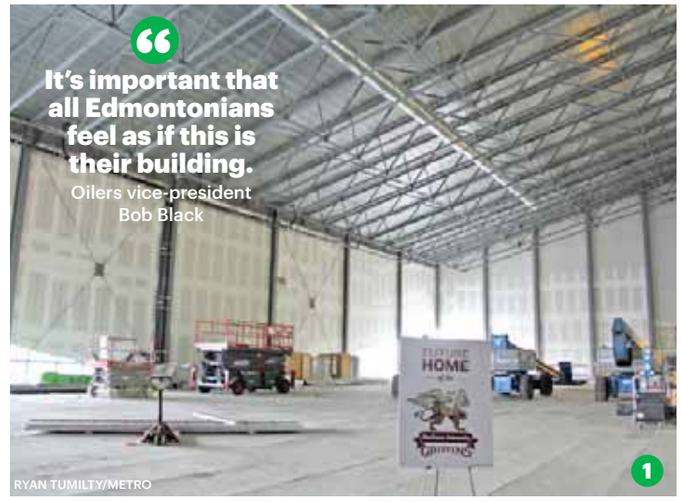
"We're studying city planning so the effects of the arena will be interesting," he said.

Barricades were set up for what were expected to be very long lines, but the minus-25C temperatures meant only thousands — not tens of thousands — showed up to see the building.

Oilers vice-president Bob Black said it was really gratifying to see the people that did come.

"It really speaks to the enthusiasm and passion of Edmontonians," he said.

He said everyone involved in the project wanted this chance to show off the building, because it's meant to be a public building.


"It's important that all Edmontonians feel as if this is their building.
Oilers vice-president Bob Black
HOME
RYAN TUMILTY/METRO
1

"It's important that all Edmontonians feel as if this is their building," he said.

The city's general manager on the project Rick Daviss echoed those sentiments and said it was really nice to see so many people engaged in the project.

"Everything I have just heard has been nothing but excitement from the people who took an opportunity to come into a construction site," he said.

The building is set to be turned over to the Oilers on Sept. 2, and both men said the project remains on time and on budget.

1 Versatility — The community rink will be used by children's teams as well as by the MacEwan University Gryphons and as a practice surface for the Oilers.

2 Fans galore — The cold temperatures kept many away, but there were still lineups to get inside the building on Saturday.

3 Showing their colours — Lifelong fans Ryan Wolfert (left) and Stefan Spasojevic (right) display an Oilers flag during a tour on Saturday.

4 Getting up close — The tour allowed fans down to ice level in the new building. The Oilers flag in the middle of this photo represents the future home of centre ice.

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Psychiatrist debunks Blue Monday trend

MENTAL HEALTH

Suicide rates not highest on that day, says CMHA

Jeremy Simes
For Metro | Calgary

Blue Monday isn't a thing, according to a U of C prof and various mental health organizations. JEREMY SIMES/FOR METRO

Blue Monday is pretty silly, according to Dr. Scott Patten.

Patten, a psychiatrist and professor with the department of psychiatry at the University of Calgary, is among many people and organizations looking to debunk the so-called saddest day of the year, or Blue Monday.

Though he admits Canadians feel most depressed in January, he said there's a big difference between being depressed and feeling blue.

"The concept of Blue Monday is intended to refer to sadness or blue-moods, which wouldn't be the same as a clinical form of depression," he said.

Among other factors, the increase in depression is largely due to the lack of sunlight during winter, Patten said.

"(Depression) has many causes," he said. "But there is a fair bit of evidence that shows depression is connected to the change in photo periods, or the shortening of days."

Patten noted Blue Monday was coined by a travel agency looking to boost its flight sales during January.

In fact, Blue Monday is based on a pseudoscientific equation that includes variables like grease quotient, calorific value, side salad drag factor, likelihood of food poisoning and sobriety of customer, among others.

"I think (the equation) is potentially damaging," he said. "I think it could diminish the credibility of real science."

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), some people also think Blue Monday has the most suicides.

That also isn't true, the organization said.

Although slightly, suicide rates normally peak in the spring and summer and are generally level throughout the year, according to the CMHA.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) also comes into play during the fall and winter months, though those who experience SAD symptoms experience it 40 per cent of the year, the CMHA said.

Patten said Blue Monday could also trivialize depression.

"For some people, these are substantial health issues they have to grapple with," he said. "That's serious, and to have people play games with it for marketing could be damaging in that respect."

However, people who are literally depressed on Blue Monday should seek help by contacting their local crisis centre, said the CMHA.

REACTION

What is the saddest day of the year?

I think the saddest day of the year for anyone would be the anniversary of one of their loved ones who died.
Sam Vanhorn, 25

This sounds bad, but I'm going to say Christmas. It's a stressful time for a lot of people.
Elissa Lee, 25

Definitely 9/11 — I think that day really affected a lot of people.
Friedrich Czarnecki, 26

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Vets slam pet cosmetic surgery

ANIMAL WELFARE

Breed clubs blamed for docked tails, cropped ears

More veterinarians in Canada are speaking out against pet cosmetic surgery such as removing the tails of puppies and cutting dog ears into points, but the pace of change is slow.

Ear-cropping and tail-docking are already prohibited in seven provinces either by law or regulatory bylaws.

Ear-cropping is common among Great Danes, Dobermans, boxers and schnauzers.

The decision on whether to operate is left up to individual animal doctors in Alberta, Ontario and Quebec, even though veterinary groups oppose such procedures in principle.

Dr. Nicole Gallant, president of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, said vets are under pressure to perform cosmetic surgery.

Ending the practice will depend on reducing demand for dogs with unnaturally bobbed tails and pointy ears, she said. That involves breed clubs amending their standards so dogs can be shown in their natural state without penalty.

People often refer to show dogs for how their pet is supposed to look."The changes have to come in the breed standards," Gallant said.

"We have been just so programmed to see the altered dog as the normal. People have to expect unaltered dogs."

The College of Veterinarians of British Columbia recently voted to ban cosmetic ear-cropping.

Other provinces that prohibit the practice include Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Ear-cropping and tail-docking have been banned in Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

A boxer with natural ears that haven't been cut into points. CANADIAN VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION/ THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canadian Salim Alaradi and his son, Mohamed Alaradi are shown on a family vacation in the United Arab Emirates in a 2013 family handout photo. CONTRIBUTED/THE CANADIAN PRESS

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Canadian man to get his day in court

A Canadian man detained without charge in the United Arab Emirates for more than a year is expected to finally learn what he's accused of at a trial set to begin on Monday.

Salim Alaradi, a 46-year-old Canadian of Libyan origin, was running a business in Dubai when he was abruptly arrested in August 2014.

His family and lawyers have received no explanation from U.A.E. authorities for his continued detention and there have been allegations he has been tortured behind bars. Alaradi's trial will be held at the State Security Chamber of the U.A.E. Federal Supreme Court, a venue his Canadian lawyer said suggests he will be charged with terrorism-related offences.

"One way or another it appears that the U.A.E. wants to bring this file to a close," Paul Champ said. "We were hopeful that the Emiratis were simply going to release Salim but unfortunately they've decided to lay charges."

> **It appears that the U.A.E. wants to bring this file to a close.**
> Paul Champ

There are concerns Alaradi may not get a fair trial since he will have no right of appeal and alleged forced confessions may be made admissible, Champ said. Nonetheless, the legal process is being seen as a significant development in Alaradi's case which had appeared stalled until now.

"He is happy to learn that there are charges because at least it signals that the end of this ordeal may be near," Champ said.

Alaradi was born in Libya and immigrated to Canada from the U.A.E. in 1998, settling down in Vancouver with his family. He decided to return to the U.A.E. in 2007 to run a home appliance business with his brother.

He and his family were on vacation when he was arrested.

For two months his family didn't know if he was dead or alive. They then found out he was being held at an Abu Dhabi prison, though they have never been told why.

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Women fighting back

MIDDLE EAST

Film captures revolution in Rojava, Syria

Women taking power in ways the Middle East has never before seen. Men, at their side, taking the radical transformation in stride.

And together, by consensus, both fighting tooth and nail against the Islamic State of IRaq and the Levant (ISIL) — and winning — liberating towns and villages in northern Syria with the promise of a new kind of freedom, where all are welcome to a fair share of collective self-rule, regardless of gender, religion or ethnicity.

It is actually happening throughout the sliver of terrain known as Rojava, the predominantly Kurdish territory abutting Syria's border with Turkey.

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) doesn't like it. Turkey doesn't like it. Bashar Assad doesn't like it. Yet the quiet revolution in Rojava isn't just taking root; it is growing, thanks in part to the White House, which has deputized the mostly Kurdish revolutionary fighters as effective boots on the ground on the Syrian side of the campaign against the Islamic State.

From left, Tarine Homs, Rabeha Hessin and Majdoleen Sheran, part of the revolution taking hold in the Rojava territory of northern Syria. COURTESY NADIM FETAIH

The fruits of the U.S. alliance with Syria's Kurdish paramilitary fighters — the People's Protection Units, or YPG, and their female counterparts, YPJ — became clear over Christmas, with the Kurds leading a four-day sweep south from Kobani, snipping some 640 square kilometres from the caliphate's map and seizing back from ISIL a key piece of infrastructure, the Tishrin Dam.

Independent Toronto filmmaker Nadim Fetaih has been on the ground with a crew of two other Canadians, capturing the changes unfolding as the fragile Rojava revolution takes hold. "We've been able to get access inside the military complex in Kobani and spend time with the wounded fighters — a fairly even 50-50 split of men and women and they're all badasses. But the YPJ women, because they are going to the front and laying their lives on the line, are able to come back to town and essentially create their own world. They are respected.

The Canadian team behind the film titled This is Kobanec. COURTESY NADIM FETAIH

Fetaih's documentary, This Is Kobane, he readily admits, will involve "a bias for and by the people — I'm hoping with my films I can actually empower people," he said. THE CANADIAN PRESS

HUMAN RIGHTS

Man a sexual refugee

At first, Rasheed thought the Syrian police were hounding him for his political views.

But Rasheed, 32, who requested not to have his full name used, believes the real motive came to the fore the day he and a few fellow gay men were carted off to a local jail. The police blindfolded him, beat him and made revealing comments after seizing his cellphone containing content that made his sexual preferences plain.

Such attitudes — the norm in his homeland, he says — were what allowed Rasheed to claim refugee status in Canada and begin a new life.

"I find it very respectful," he said of Canada. "Whenever I say I'm gay or whenever I go to gay places, in the society itself, they respect you for being gay."

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has named single men identifying as gay, bisexual or transgender as among those who are most vulnerable in Syria.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

IRIB/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

AMERICAN CENTRE FOR LAW AND JUSTICE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Iran released four American detainees on the weekend, including 1 Amir Hekmati , a former U.S. Marine, **2 Saeed Abedini,** a pastor, and **3 Jason Rezaian** a Washington Post correspondent. Also freed was **Nosratollah Khosravi-Roodsari,** who stayed in Iran.

Iran frees Americans

DIPLOMACY

Countries swap prisoners in massive deal

Diplomatic triumph or travesty, America's relationship with one of its most intractable foes took two giant leaps forward this weekend when Iran released four Americans in a prisoner swap after locking in last summer's nuclear deal and receiving some $100 billion in sanctions relief.

Speaking from the White House, U.S. President Barack Obama on Sunday hailed the "historic progress through diplomacy."

Three of the American detainees — Washington Post reporter Jason Rezaian, former U.S. Marine Amir Hekmati and pastor Saeed Abedini — arrived in Germany en route to a U.S. military hospital. They will return home after medical evaluations.

The fourth, Nosratollah Khosravi-Roodsari, opted to remain in Iran, officials said.

A fifth American, student Matthew Trevithick, who had been detained in Iran for roughly 40 days, was released separately.

Iran released the prisoners in exchange for pardons or charges dropped against seven Iranians — six of whom hold dual U.S. citizenship — serving time for or accused of sanctions violations in the United States.

The deal was finalized hours after Saturday night's UN confirmation that Iran made good on pledges to significantly back away from atomic bomb-making capacity. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Upbeat slave book pulled

Scholastic is pulling a controversial new picture book about George Washington and his slaves.

The book, titled A Birthday Cake for George Washington, was released Jan. 5 and had been strongly criticized for its upbeat images and story of Washington's cook, the slave Hercules. Its withdrawal was announced Sunday. The book was written by Ramin Ganeshramand and illustrated by Vanessa Brantley Newton. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SANCTION RELIEF

New economic reality dawns on Tehran

The implementation of a historic nuclear deal with world powers is expected to pave the way for a new economic reality in Iran, now freed from harsh international sanctions.

More than $30 billion in assets overseas will become immediately available to the nation. Iran's Central Bank Governor, Valiollah Seif, was quoted by the official IRNA news agency as saying that Iran will not transfer the cash and instead will use it to import the goods it needs. Official Iranian reports have set the total amount of frozen Iranian assets overseas at $100 billion.

A European oil embargo on Iran will end. Already, some 38 million barrels of oil are in Iran's floating reserves, ready to enter the market, according to the International Energy Agency.

All that means even more money coming into the country, allowing it to undertake needed repairs to its oil and gas fields to boost its own production. Iran is home to the world's fourth-largest proven reserve of crude oil and ranks second in proven natural gas reserves behind Russia.

Tehran already seems to be making plans for its post-sanctions economy and infrastructure. Transport Minister Abbas Akhondi told the official IRNA news agency Saturday that his government had agreed to buy 114 new planes from the European consortium Airbus. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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A policeman stands guard in front of the Splendid hotel, on Sunday in Ouagadougou, after a jihadist attack by gunmen linked to al-Qaida on Jan. 15. **The attack left 28 people dead, with 56 wounded.** ISSOUF SANOGO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Canadian aid workers dead

BURKINA FASO

Family of four among killed, wounded in nation's capital

Six Canadian humanitarian workers from Quebec were among those killed in an attack by Islamic extremists in Burkina Faso's capital, Ouagadougou.

Twenty-eight people of 18 nationalities were killed and 56 others wounded after a 15-hour siege that ended Saturday night at a hotel popular with international business travellers.

The Canadians were: Yves Carrier; his daughter Maude; his wife, Gladys Chamberland; their son Charlélie, and their friends Louis Chabot and Suzanne Bernier, all residents of Quebec, according to reports from La Presse.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau led a moment of silence for the victims on Sunday at a restored mosque in Peterborough, Ont., which was firebombed in the aftermath of deadly attacks in Paris last November.

Carrier and his family members and friends worked with a Catholic organization and the Centre Amitié de Solidarité Internationale de la Région des Appalaches.

Louis Chabot, a friend of the Carriers, was also killed in the attack in Ouagadougou.

They had been celebrating the three weeks of work they had done repainting blackboards for a school in a remote Burkinabe village.

The humanitarian workers headed to Africa just before Christmas after months of preparation, organization and fundraising activities in Quebec.

With four attackers killed and al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb claiming responsibility for the massacre, Burkina Faso's newly elected president acknowledged his small country has now been drawn into the line of Islamist extremist fire that has recently targeted Paris, neighbouring Mali and Indonesia.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Gladys Chamberland

Yves Carrier

Maude Carrier

Charlélie Carrier

Louis Chabot

Suzanne Bernier

PHOTOS: FACEBOOK.COM VIA TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Survivors recall the attacks

As al-Qaida fighters attacked the café where he worked, Clement Djiguende was saved by chance: a jihadist who had been firing at patrons simply ran out of bullets.

The gun stuck for a moment. Then the militant, dressed in black and a turban, tried several times to reload. That's when Djiguende and another server bolted toward the bathrooms not far from the bar where only moments earlier they had been serving cold drinks on just another Friday night.

About 20 other people were already crowding into the toilets in a bid to save their lives as the sound of gunfire resumed at the Cappuccino Café. Others tried to climb through the restaurant's broken windows. Some managed to get to the roof where they waited for the carnage to stop.

Witnesses said four attackers stormed the café around 7:30 p.m. Not only did they shoot at patrons, they also set the café ablaze. Soon it began filling with smoke, forcing Djiguende and the others in the restrooms to wet pieces of their clothing and escape by crouching on the ground.

"Upon reaching the terrace, my hand touched a body.... I kept it together," he said. "I crossed another and then a third body, where I laid and pretended for a while that I, too, was dead."

He kept crawling for another six metres before springing to his feet and running into another nearby restaurant.

By then, the jihadists had entered the neighbouring Splendid Hotel. Andre Bationo, a waiter at the hotel, said he was cleaning in the dining room when a girl selling handicrafts to guests burst in to say that jihadists were killing people outside.

"Burkina Faso," he said, "will never be the same again."

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Tsai Ing-wen, the chairwoman of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party, won the presidential election.
ULET IFANSASTI/GETTY IMAGES

First female president elected

TAIWAN

Key issues with China await country's new head of state

Taiwan's presidential election victor Tsai Ying-wen will enjoy a broad mandate from her commanding victory and her independence-leaning party's new legislative majority, but managing the island's delicate relations with China will be tricky.

Already, Beijing warned following her Saturday night victory that it will not budge on its bottom line that Taiwan's leader must agree that the communist mainland and self-governing island democracy are part of a single Chinese nation. The sides could be in for a lengthy wait as China assesses whether it feels it can trust Tsai.

> **Cross-Taiwan Strait relations ... will be difficult.**
> Huang Jing, Singapore National University

"To handle cross-Taiwan Strait relations after Tsai's election will be difficult, not just for Taiwan but also for mainland China," said Huang Jing, a China expert at Singapore National University's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

Tsai, who will be Taiwan's first female president, won by 56 per cent of the vote to 31 per cent for her closest rival Eric Chu of the China-friendly Nationalist Party, which has held the presidency for the last eight years. Her Democratic Progressive Party won 68 of 113 parliamentary seats, giving it its first majority in the assembly long-dominated by the Nationalists.

The size of the win could also put additional pressure on Tsai and the DPP, said Larry Diamond, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution who closely follows Taiwanese politics.

"When you do as well, as decisively as the DPP has done, there are no excuses" for failure, Diamond said.

While China had largely refrained on commenting about the election beforehand, its Taiwan Affairs Office responded swiftly to the result with a statement reiterating that it would deal only with those who agree that the "two sides of the strait belong to one China."

That was followed by another statement from the Foreign Ministry stating that "China's sovereignty and territorial integrity brook no division. The result of the election in Taiwan will not change the basic fact and the consensus of the international community."

"On such a major issue as safeguarding state sovereignty and territorial integrity, the Chinese government has rock-solid determination and never tolerates any separatist activities aiming at 'Taiwan independence,'" said the statement, quoting ministry spokesman Hong Lei.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FRANCE

Drug trial leaves man dead, five hospitalized

A man died in a French hospital Sunday after taking part in an experimental drug trial for a painkiller, and five other participants remain hospitalized after one of France's most troubling medical incidents.

French prosecutors have launched a manslaughter investigation into the unusual case, which shined a spotlight on the practice of testing drugs on paid, healthy human volunteers. Scores of others were also given the drug.

The Portuguese pharmaceutical company testing the drug, Bial, said in a statement that it's working with health authorities to determine what caused "this tragic and unfortunate situation."

The Rennes University Hospital in western France announced the death in a statement but didn't identify the patient, who had already been in a state of brain death.

He was among six male volunteers between 28 and 49 hospitalized last week after volunteering to take the drug. French health authorities have said three of the hospitalized volunteers face possible brain damage.

The Paris prosecutor's office said the investigation was expanded after the death to include potential manslaughter charges.

The trial, which began Jan. 7, involved 90 healthy volunteers who were given the experimental drug in varying doses at different times.

The drug was given orally to healthy volunteers as part of a Phase 1 trial by Biotrial, a drug evaluation company based in Rennes, on behalf of Bial.

Health Minister Marisol Touraine said that in addition to treating pain, the drug was intended to ease mood and anxiety troubles as well as motor problems linked to neurodegenerative illnesses by acting on the endocannabinoid system.

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IT TAKES A COMMUNITY TO SAVE A LIFE
ZACH MCGRATH
When three-year-old Zach McGrath discovered he was too short to reach the DVD player, he climbed the dresser to reach the controls and the TV collapsed on him.
"The kids were screaming and I could tell by their faces it was really bad," said Rhonda Sarroleski, Zach's mother, who called 911 when she found her son buried under a TV and dresser.
The local fire department was first on scene, followed by paramedics — who knew Zach needed immediate critical care and called STARS.
"Everyone worked together to help save Zach but if STARS wasn't there for us it could have been very different," said Rhonda. "It's still hard to believe we have a happy ending."
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$40B in aid needed worldwide: Panel

FINANCIAL CRISIS

UN report finds number of people in need growing

An estimated $40 billion is needed annually to help the rapidly growing number of people needing humanitarian aid as a result of conflicts and natural disasters — and one possibility to help fill the $15-billion funding gap is a small voluntary tax on tickets for soccer games and other sports, concerts and entertainment events, airline travel, and gasoline, a UN-appointed panel said.

The panel's report on humanitarian financing, launched Sunday by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, says the world is spending around $25 billion to provide life-saving assistance to 125 million people devastated by wars and natural disasters — more than 12 times the $2 billion that was spent in 2000.

The nine-member panel calculated that an additional $15 billion is needed annually to reduce suffering and save lives. It warned that if current trends continue, the cost of humanitarian assistance will rise to $50 billion by 2030.

$25 billion

The amount the world spent last year in life-saving assistance for people living in countries devastated by war and natural disasters.

"This is an age of mega-crises," Ban said at the launch event, which was held at a desert site in Dubai that serves as a logistical hub for UN emergency humanitarian supplies and international relief efforts.

The 31-page report said that despite $25 billion being spent last year to provide life-saving assistance to people around the world, 1.6 million Syrian refugees had their food rations cut and 750,000 Syrian refugees could not attend school.

"While record sums are being given to the noble cause of humanitarian action, generosity has never been so insufficient. We cannot go on like this," Ban said, adding that humanitarian assistance is now the UN's costliest activity, surpassing peacekeeping missions.

The report focuses on three solutions for how to reform humanitarian aid: mobilizing additional funds, particularly from the private sector; shrinking the need for aid through prevention and quicker resolution of problems, and improving the efficiency of assistance to reflect the needs of people rather than the needs of aid organizations. It calls for donors and aid organizations to come together in "a Grand Bargain" in which donors provide more cash, long-term, with fewer strings, and aid organizations are more transparent so that everyone can "follow the money."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WEATHER BLIZZARDS HIT EASTERN EUROPE. Schools will be closed on Monday in some regions affected by blizzards, among them Bucharest, the main city of Romania. Blizzards battered parts of Eastern Europe on Sunday, forcing roads to close, trains and flights to be cancelled and producing power outages. Romania's transportation ministry said 12 major roads were closed Sunday because of heavy snow and three Black Sea ports had to shut down because of high winds. DANIEL MIHAILESCU/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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IMMIGRATION

Don't label migrants as a security threat: IOM chief

The head of the International Organization for Migration said Sunday that Europe must avoid viewing migrants as a "security threat" following the New Year's Eve assaults in Cologne and November's attacks in Paris.

William Lacy Swing was in Berlin at a time when Chancellor Angela Merkel faces mounting pressure over her open-door policy toward refugees. Germany registered nearly 1.1 million people as asylum seekers last year but most other European Union countries remain reluctant to take significant numbers.

Swing told The Associated Press that Merkel and Germans in general deserve "a lot of praise and credit" for taking in large numbers of refugees, "and I think one should not let the terrible incident that happened in Cologne mar what is a very good approach to the issue."

The events in Cologne — a string of robberies and sexual assaults — were blamed largely on foreigners, and some suspects are asylum-seekers. The Paris attacks in November already had fueled anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe.

Migrants wait inside a tent to keep warm before departing from the registration camp after crossing from the Macedonian border into Serbia on Sunday. VISAR KRYEZIU/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

"We don't want now, because of what happened in Paris and what happened in Cologne, suddenly to link refugees who are fleeing terrorism ... with some kind of security threat," Swing said.

"We have to find a way, and I know Germany's really trying to do that now, how do we give the compelling argument to our people that, historically, migration has always been a very positive force in the lives of countries?" he said. Swing, a longtime U.S. diplomat, noted that "my own country was built on the backs of migrants, and with the talent and brains of migrants."

The IOM says that 23,664 migrants arrived in Europe by sea in this year's first two weeks — all but 362 of them in Greece.

Last year, just over 1 million arrived. The asylum-seekers registered in Germany included large numbers of people from the Balkans. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Yemen police chief survives car bombing

MIDDLE EAST

Suicide attacker drove vehicle into officer's home

A suicide car bomber rammed his vehicle into the police chief's house in the southern Yemeni city of Aden on Sunday, killing seven civilians and security forces in a failed assassination attempt after militants killed two other security officials elsewhere in the country.

Police Chief Shallal Shayei survived a similar assassination attempt last month, as did the governor of the province earlier this month. Aden's previous governor was killed in an attack claimed by a local affiliate of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Ambulances raced to the police chief's house after the explosion, which could be heard across the city, witnesses said. Officials said an armoured vehicle blocked the suicide car bomber metres from the gates of the house. Seven people were killed and 12 injured after the explosion ripped through a bus that was passing by.

Yemen has been mired in a conflict pitting the Shiite Houthi rebels against the internationally-backed government, which is allied with a Saudi-led coalition. The fighting has killed more than 5,800 people since last March, when the coalition began striking Houthi targets from the air.

The chaos has allowed a powerful local al-Qaida affiliate and a more recently formed branch of ISIL to expand their reach, including in Aden.

U.S. drones have carried out a number of strikes since the start of the year targeting al-Qaida militants, according to security officials and witnesses, who said drone strikes killed 13 militants on Sunday in Jaar, a town seized by al-Qaida last year.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AIRSTRIKES

Saudi coalition steps up military offensive

The Saudi-led coalition meanwhile appears to have stepped up airstrikes in northern Yemen targeting the Houthis and army units loyal to a former president. Residents said the coalition launched 35 strikes on Sunday in the capital and northern province of Jawf.

ZOO GIANT PANDA CUB MAKES FIRST APPEARANCE
Smithsonian's youngest giant panda cub, Bei Bei, made his public debut Sunday following his birth last August at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C. Bei Bei, whose name means "precious" or "treasure," was named by U.S. and Chinese First Ladies Michelle Obama and Peng Liyuan. OLIVIER DOULIERY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

WEATHER

Storm spawns twin tornadoes, two dead

Severe weather sparked a pair of tornadoes that ripped through central Florida before dawn Sunday, officials said. A couple was killed and their son and four grandchildren were injured when one of the twisters destroyed their mobile home.

"I'm amazed to see anybody got out of this alive," said Manatee County Sheriff Brad Steube.

Steube said that the victims of the tornado in Duette were asleep in their mobile home when the tornado struck. Steven Wilson, 58, was killed immediately, while his wife, Kate, died from a heart attack after being taken to a hospital. Their son, also named Steven Wilson, crawled out of the wreckage and helped his four children — aged between six and 10 — out of the home.

The Sarasota Police Department reported downed trees, minor flooding and mangled parking structures in the city.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Damage from a storm surrounds a car Sunday in Sarasota, Fla. One of two tornadoes killed two grandparents and injured their four grandchildren. SARASOTA COUNTY GOVERNMENT/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAS VEGAS

Wearables that stood out at CES

While wrist-worn devices like the Fitbit remain the most popular type of wearable, companies are continuing to develop smart items for other parts of the body.

Some analysts predict 2016 will be the year wearables reach beyond nerds and athletes.

Here are four wearables that stood out at CES:

1 THE SMART BRA
Available: Spring 2016
Cost: $149 US for starting kit and $59 US for an additional bra

Montreal-based OMsignal's first crack at the women's clothing market tracks heart rate, distance and calories as well as more detailed data such as breathing rhythm.

2 THE SMART SKI AIRBAG VEST
Available: Only to professional skiers for now, in stores as of July 2016.
Cost: Around 1,200 euros

When its sensors detect a loss of balance, the ski airbag vest can inflate in 100 milliseconds, protecting the neck, chest, spine, abdomen and hips, the French company In&motion says.

3 THE JUMP MONITOR
Available: May 2016
Cost: $125-150 US

Many wearable gadgets measure general fitness, but the Vert2 monitor hones in on the user's jump. The size of a USB stick, it clips on to the waist and tracks height and jump count as well as intensity, total Gs and other measurements, all in real-time.

4 MORE STYLISH FITBIT
Available: Now at major Canadian retailers, including Best Buy, Indigo and London Drugs
Cost: $249.95

Fitbit's first colour smartwatch, the Blaze, tracks heart rate, sleep and more. The smart watch automatically recognizes the activity you're doing, whether it's hiking, basketball or even Zumba. Other features include on-screen workouts and calendar notifications.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

IN BRIEF

Sweet'N Low to end Brooklyn production

Family-owned Sweet'N Low is stopping production in Brooklyn after almost 60 years and shifting entirely to other parts of the country. That would leave only the company's headquarters in the borough.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Netflix to offer more family shows this year

Netflix says it will make a special effort to produce programming for children and families, offering 20 new programs in the category this year led by the Feb. 26 premiere of the Fuller House remake.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Costly cauliflower too rich for menus

FOOD

Cucumber, tomato and celery prices likely to rise

The falling loonie and a drought in California have helped drive prices for cauliflower toward double digits a head, forcing restaurants to raise prices or discontinue dishes. ISTOCK

The soaring price of cauliflower is forcing restaurants with signature dishes featuring the cabbage relative to rethink their menus and hike prices.

Over the past few years, the vegetable once considered boring has been springing up on menus in innovative ways.

However, the sliding loonie and a drought in California have helped drive prices for the snowy white vegetable toward double digits a head, causing a cauliflower crisis. At least one restaurant chain famous for its take on cauliflower is passing on some of the extra costs to its customers.

In Vancouver, diners frequent Nuba restaurants just to taste Najib's Special, said founder Victor Bouzide. The dish, named after his father, is a crispy cauliflower concoction based on his grandmother's recipe. Since the new year, Bouzide's raised the price by about a dollar. A plate now costs $13, while the appetizer runs customers $9.75.

The restaurant now pays more than double what it used to for a case of the cruciferous vegetable, up to $60 a case. That means Nuba needs 100 cases a week to feed its cauliflower-loving customers.

Still, Bouzide can't fathom discontinuing the dish, like some others have opted to do.

Toronto's Fat Pasha drew accolades for its whole roasted cauliflower head when it opened in 2014. About a month ago, the offering disappeared from the menu.

$60

The price per case of cauliflower that Nuba restaurants of Vancouver pays, more than double the earlier rates.

"As much as people love it, if we're losing money on it or we're charging too much, no one's going to feel good about it," chef Kevin Gilmour said.

The dish cost $18, he said, but with the cost of the main ingredient, the restaurant would have to charge up to $40 for it now.

That just wasn't viable, said Gilmour, who replaced it with a local, more price-consistent option: acorn squash.

Squash may be the next go-to ingredient for chefs looking for a new heir to cauliflower's popularity since many other vegetables, not just cauliflower, are steadily increasing in price.

Celery, cucumber, tomatoes are all slowly taking themselves out of the running.

Edgar Gutierrez, the chef at Rostizado in Edmonton, has been experimenting with fennel with some success. He thinks fennel could be versatile enough to resonate with diners this year.

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SOLAR POWER

Marketers sell green benefits

Want to cut reliance on your fossil-fuel-burning utility, but don't have space for solar panels? Easy, the sales pitch goes, buy a share in the new "community solar array" being built on the outskirts of town.

But experts and regulators say there's a catch. Some of the biggest marketers of such deals are stripping the "green" benefits out of them and selling them elsewhere, leaving homeowners with a small discount on the same electricity they were using before.

It's commonplace and legal for companies and governments to swap energy credits. In this case, though, critics say it's a case of environmentalism meets the old Tom Waits line: "The large print giveth and the small print taketh away."

What SunCommon, Vermont's largest seller of community solar, is taking away are the renewable energy credits, or RECs, tied to community solar projects. They're selling those credits to utilities in Massachusetts and Connecticut so they can meet state requirements that they get a certain percentage of their power from renewable sources.

Severin Borenstein, a business administration professor at the University of California at Berkeley, who has followed the issue, described it this way in a blog post this month:

"If you've installed solar at your home and are now basking in the I'm-saving-the-planet warm glow, you may be in for a splash of ice water. There's a good chance someone else has purchased your halo and is wearing it right now."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

metro VIEWS
Your essential daily news
Monday, January 18, 2016

THE BIG NUMBER

40%

That's the decline, adjusted for inflation, of parliamentary funding to the CBC between 1990-91 and 2014-15.

Using data from the Treasury Board of Canada, the advocacy group Friends of Canadian Broadcasting calculated that in 2014 dollars, the federal government's grant to the CBC declined from around $1.73 billion (in 1990-1991) to approximately $1.04 billion (in 2014-2015). Most of the cuts took place in the 1990s, while Jean Chrétien was prime minster, with more slashes during the Harper years. Those hit just as digital advertising and the mobile revolution were transforming broadcasting's business model faster than you can change the channel or switch the station. In 2014, the CBC president said the staff would shrink by another one-quarter by 2020. Whether we actually see that particular TV and radio drama play out is still up in the air: Before he was elected, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised a $150-million boost to CBC's yearly funding. How that plot unfolds — and how much money the broadcaster manages to make from its advertisers and audience — could determine whether Canadians hear more business news or more banter on the airwaves in the coming years.

SOURCE: MARKETING MAGAZINE

A modern idea for a cool 'hood: Coexistence

KLASZUS' CALGARY
Jeremy Klaszus

What is the rest of Calgary to do with Inglewood?

First, Canadian planners name it Canada's Greatest Neighbourhood. Now residents are upset over plans for a new Domino's Pizza in the community.

"No chains here!" they cry, like a throng of mohawked anti-globalization protesters from the 1990s.

Yes, Inglewood, you're anti-establishment and quirky and kind of gritty. We get it.

Chains don't necessarily ruin character, however. They coexist throughout the city in a variety of settings.

Take Marlborough Mall. It's one of the most interesting spots in Calgary, and it's full of chains: Walmart, HMV, Sears — you name it.

Even so, there's character and community. Like Inglewood, it's a place of the people in its own way.

To see this, go through the food court and down the hallway to the public washrooms. Tucked into a room past the toilets is a cobbler's shop called the Capitol Hill Shoe Clinic.

It's surely one of the quirkiest retail locations in the city.

This is where a 61-year-old cobbler named Sam Alain sells boots and practises his craft as the nearby bathroom hand-dryers scream like Boeing 747s.

"We are a hidden shop," said Alain.

He started this business 40 years ago, and has worked on everything from the Hart family's wrestling boots to customers' broken pot handles. People from all walks of life bring him stuff to mend.

When I visited the shop last week, Alain had a steady stream of customers, including a young roofer wearing pants that Alain custom-made to stand up to the abuse of the job, and an elderly couple from Three Hills who bought boots.

"Each time you wear these boots, you remember me," Alain told them, eyes twinkling.

Others came in just to chat with Alain at the shop's colourful counter, which displays a spread of international currencies given to him by customers over the years. "Every bill here has a story," Alain said.

The son of a Syrian cobbler, Alain started the shop in the northwest neighbourhood of Capitol Hill. He moved to the mall in 1978 and kept the name. He says it's a lucky name.

Yes, Inglewood, you're anti-establishment and quirky and kind of gritty. We get it.

These days he just works the morning shift. His sons Danny and Sam, both in their 30s, run the shop now.

The Alain family has had to contend with a changing market. In an age of throwaway consumer goods, including footwear, cobbling is a tough go. Danny credits his father's personality and craftsmanship with keeping the business afloat for so many years.

"He's got a way with people," said Danny.

As I got ready to leave, a Subway employee entered and gave a bag of cookies to Sam Sr., who gratefully received them.

There you have it: The indie family business and the evil chain restaurant, living side by side in happy harmony.

Jeremy Klaszus is a journalist and stay-at-home dad.

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD
metroview

CBC morning shows should be fuel, not fluff

A morning routine is not to be messed with.

It should contain fuel (especially coffee), clean-ish clothing, some kind of slap in the face (exercise, or coffee) and the news.

And when I say news, I mean the latest out of Ottawa (the Saudi Arabia arms deal, say), the state of Alberta's economy, what's new at the Supreme Court, let alone politics, health and science stories from outside our border.

I do not mean an update on the zoo's panda bear cubs or the latest high school wunderkind to design socks. And I certainly don't need to hear, on the local CBC morning show, how the host and weather announcer feel about Adele's new viral video (spoiler: They love it!).

In the age of Twitter (arguably the best way to get news, anyway), in a world so tightly bound that our food prices are skyrocketing as global oil prices fall, the CBC is failing us.

Folksy, meandering, fascinated with the minutiae of a city — its morning shows are often the audio equivalent of reading the community-event listings. And while there can be gold there, it's never front-page news. The shows lack gravitas. They lack scope. Their programming better belongs in a leisurely afternoon slot. And funnily enough, afternoon programs on the CBC sound remarkably like those in the morning.

I don't blame the producers (I used to be one) or the hosts (though some seem far too keen to waste my time with coffee-shop chatter about their bike commute to work) — I blame the network.

The CBC's morning shows are run on a strict formula that focuses on celebrity hosts and hyper-local news at the expense of everything else. Each hour, there's usually only about ten minutes of national and international news at the top of the clock. That's less time than they spend playing (often horrible) music. It's appalling.

In fact, the CBC should reverse the ratios. It could keep the best of its local news and politics coverage, trim the fat of host-banter, cut the music, and end up with plenty of time to properly inform me about the broader world. It could mean greater centralization of morning news production, or even just a much wider distribution of the best content produced in local stations and foreign bureaus (such as they are).

To quote U.S. media journalist and National Public Radio host extraordinaire, Brooke Gladstone, a morning program should feed our need for information, without patronizing or boring us.

Too bad the CBC can't even get the first part right.

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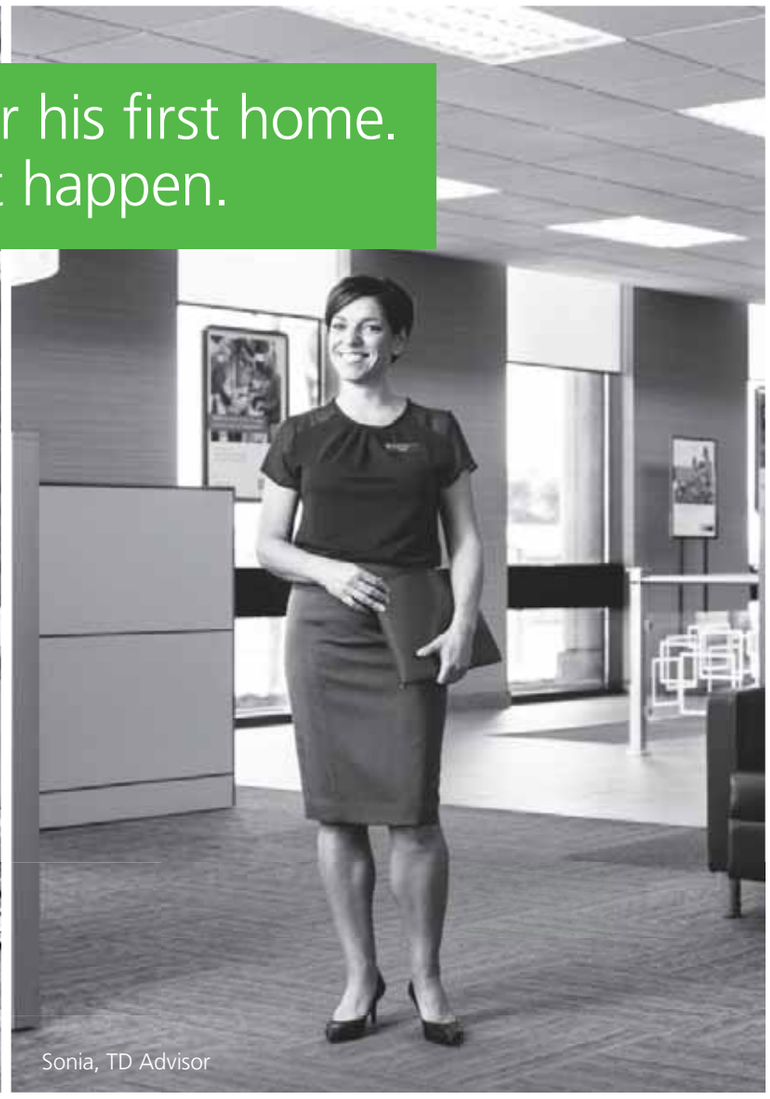

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RSP: Just for retirement?

NEST EGG

Programs help you borrow for new home, education

Michelle Williams

You can borrow against your RSP to help with the purchase of your first home. ISTOCK

"Your retirement might be decades away, but that doesn't mean you can't benefit from your retirement savings right now," says Alan Cameron, investment advisor for Investment Planning Counsel.

Whether your dream is to buy your first home or to upgrade your education, a retirement savings plan (RSP) is an investment tool that can help you reach your goals well before you turn 65. Two government programs make it possible to borrow against your RSP:

The Home Buyers' Program (HBP) lets qualified first-time home buyers borrow up to $25,000 from their RSP to buy or build a home. "It's a far more powerful way of saving for the down payment," explains Cameron.

"To save $25,000 cash, you have to earn $40,000 or more before-tax dollars. If you use your RSP, the $25,000 isn't going to be taxed." For couples buying their first home, both members can use $25,000 from each RSP, for a total of $50,000 tax-free.

You have two years before you have to start paying the money back, and 15 years to repay the total loan — essentially repaying yourself by contributing one-fifteenth of the amount to your RSP each year. If you miss a payment, you'll owe the taxes for that amount.

The HBP is a great way to raise a down payment, making it possible to buy a home for those who might otherwise have to wait several years to save the funds.

"For some buyers, it could also be the difference between having a high-risk mortgage with big insurance costs versus a low-risk mortgage," adds Cameron. While borrowing from an RSP means losing out on some of the investment's growth, the increasing value of your home could more than make up the difference if real-estate values continue to rise.

Another government program lets you borrow from your RSP to explore a new career: The Lifelong Learning Plan (LLP) lets you use up to $10,000 per year to a maximum of $20,000 over four years. It can be used toward your or your spouse's education, though not your children's schooling.

"This plan requires repayment within 10 years after you've completed your education," says Cameron. "Payments must begin the second year after you're finished school, and you're required to make at least one-tenth of payments per year."

Like the HBP, if you miss payments, you'll be taxed for any amount you don't return to your RSP.

And what if you repay the money and decide to retrain again, or your spouse wishes to take advantage of the program after your training is complete and the money has been returned to your RSP?

"You can take advantage of the program on multiple occasions through your lifetime, provided the money has been repaid to your RSP before you apply a second time," explains Cameron.

However, you're losing out on the growth of your RSP while the funds are being used for retraining, an important consideration before pulling your money out of the investment.

NEXT STEP

Borrowers need to meet a list of criteria before qualifying for either of these programs. Check online or talk to your financial planner or institution to find out more.

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metro LIFE
Your essential daily news

Pregnant women should postpone travel to 14 destinations in Latin America and the Caribbean due to outbreak of illness linked to birth defects, officials said.

Over the next three months, **Metro's finance guru Lesley-Anne Scorgie** will help a recent grad drowning in debt and a charitable young professional to balance their budget, pay down loans and save for their future

Metro's money makeover

LESLEY-ANNE SCORGIE
metro*money*

THE CHALLENGE: Our participants have set their goals, rolled up their sleeves, and committed to tackling their largest financial obstacles. For the next 12 weeks, I'll be helping Annick and Yolanda to improve their financial fitness and pushing them to reach new money milestones — just like a personal trainer. The end-goal is simple: to help these young women kick some financial ass and to see whose net worth improves the greatest.

THE VERDICT: In my experience there's only one thing that can derail Yolanda and Annick's progress: repeating financial mistakes. They'll succeed if they learn to master their finances, which happens to be more of a mind, rather than a money, matter.

NEXT WEEK: When it comes to her TFSA, Yolanda is making a big mistake.

LESLEY-ANNE SCORGIE IS A BESTSELLING AUTHOR AND FOUNDER OF MEVEST, A MONEY COACHING SERVICE FOR CANADIANS. FOLLOW HER @LESLEYSCORGIE

JENNIFER FRIESEN/FOR METRO CANADA

Annick, 24, Calgary

In 2010, Annick arrived in Calgary from Democratic Republic of Congo with dreams of a powerful Canadian education in energy management from University of Calgary. Year-over-year her student debts compounded to a suffocating $58,000.

After graduating in 2015, Annick walked into Alberta's economic lion's den — slumped energy prices and few jobs. She eventually found an administrative position at a property management company making $18/hour. But, between student loan and credit card payments plus IOUs to friends and family, she couldn't keep up. So, Annick found a second job at a car dealership in December. The pressure to send money home to her family is high, but at the end of every bi-weekly pay cycle, she literally doesn't have two nickels to rub together — zilch! Annick's has what I call "side hustle" — finding creative ways to make more money.

HER GOAL: Her challenge will be applying that skill to annihilating her debts so her long-term dreams of home ownership, bringing her parents to Canada and doing her MBA can become reality.

Yolanda, 27, Mississauga, Ont.

Yolanda tweeted at me late in 2015 to tell me how she spends not a penny more than $200 on groceries each month. Obviously I thought this was a joke considering my recent $4 tomato purchase at a store in Toronto; the most expensive place in Canada for produce (It's no joke. I was desperate).

Yolanda manages her spending carefully. She works at a charity that supports children in developing countries, and makes a fraction of market salary as a communications web specialist. But, she's willing to trade off more money (and better groceries) to pursue her passions. Just a year ago, Yolanda and her adorable pooch moved out of her mom's place and into her first basement apartment costing $750 per month.

HER GOAL: Making $20/hour, forking out money for rent and sponsoring multiple children simply won't cut it if she's going to buy a condo in the next three years and travel overseas before becoming burdened with a mortgage.

LIZ BEDDALL/METRO

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To get rich, ignore that spending itch

GROW YOUR MONEY

Make do with less and stash difference to build wealth

Gail Vaz-Oxlade
For Metro Canada

I'm going to talk about something I get letters on all the time: Wealth. People want to know how to save (where to find the money) and how much to save to be wealthy.

So let's start at the beginning. Wealth is the difference between what you earn and what you spend. Spend it all, and you'll end up with a big, fat zero. Spend less than you make and you'll build your wealth. It doesn't have to be a huge amount. But it does have to be a conscious decision because wealth doesn't just happen. You have to make it happen.

So, how much is enough? And how to make do on less so you have the money to save?

When it comes to retirement savings, if you're in your twenties as little as 6 per cent of your income will likely do. Wait until you're in your thirties and the number jumps to 10 per cent. And in your forties it's 18 per cent.

Making do on less comes in all sizes and formats. Some people go with a Make-Do week, during which they stretch everything a little farther so they spend less. Potluck dinners take the place of eating out. Making gifts replaces buying.

Spending holidays are another way to find the money that turns into wealth. No-spend days make you conscious of your spending habits. Start by spending nothing on Mondays, then add Tuesdays. Over time, you'll learn what pulls your trigger to spend.

There are a whole bunch of tools that can help you build your wealth, from RRSPs, which are older than me, to Tax-Free Savings Accounts, to Registered Educational Savings Plans for your kids. Think of each of these as separate umbrellas.

If you want to defer taxes and build a pool of money for when you retire (particularly if you don't have a company pension plan) use an RRSP.

If you want to grow your money tax-free with the flexibility to use that money and then replace it later, use a TFSA. Ditto if you want to make sure you get to keep all your government benefits when you retire.

If you want to earn free grant money from the government and have some funds available for schooling later use an RESP.

None of these umbrellas — RRSPs, TFSA, or RESPs — generate a return on their own, so they are not investments. If you put your money into any of these plans, you must then choose an investment to make your money grow. You might choose a savings account. You might choose a GIC, a mutual fund, an indexed investment, bond or stock.

Perhaps the biggest barrier to building wealth is getting started. If you belong to a company pension plan, you are already saving some money, which counts towards your overall goal. If you aren't taking full advantage of your pension plan, you're turning your back on free money so go sign up today. If you don't belong to a pension plan at work, you'll have to make your own using an RRSP, a TFSA or a combination of the two. Time to open up a plan and make those contributions — those steps to getting wealthy — monthly and automatically. There. Now you're building wealth.

For more money advice, visit Gail's website at gailvazoxlade.com

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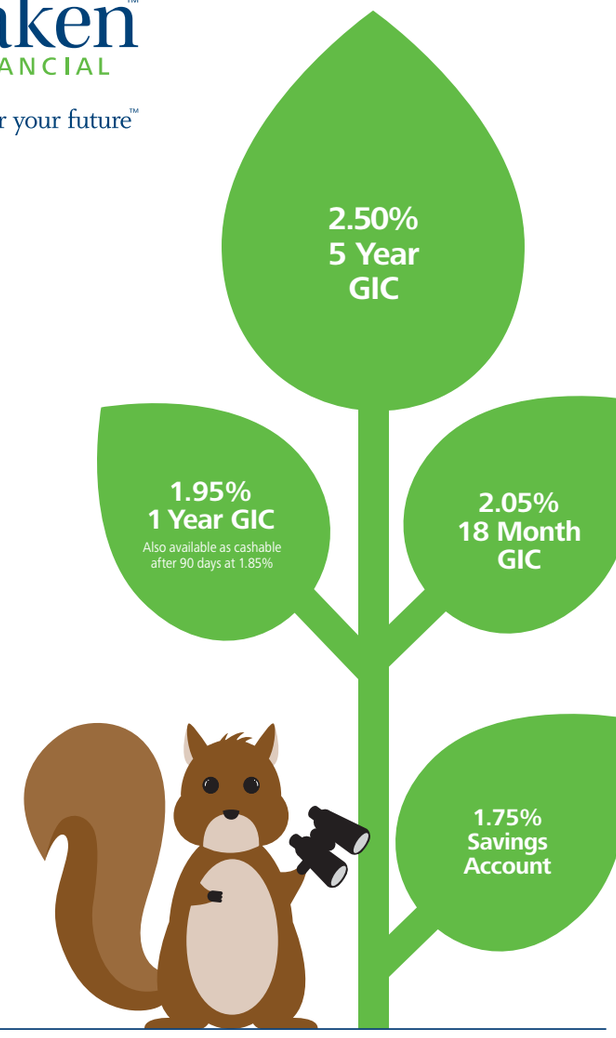

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The lifespan of a good blowout is often cut short far too quickly. We've gathered the latest products to keep your hair looking its best for at least a week.

La Vita Glam

Dannah M. Everatt, the Toronto-based founder of La Vita Glam was inspired by an Old Hollywood beauty secret — sleeping on a silk or satin pillowcase to preserve your 'do (think Marilyn Monroe) — but was unable to find quality satin and silk pillowcases. Seeing the opportunity to revive the trend, Everatt spent more than a year testing the finest fabrics. She eventually came up with the sleek GlamPillowslip.

Unlike cotton pillowcases, silk and satin ones won't cause friction and tugging on hair while you sleep. "Your hair just slides over the pillow," she says. La Vita Glam pillowslips retail for $30 (Queen size) and are machine washable. She also offers a Hair Slinky — a ponytail holder so women can work out with a blowout (a pack of three go for $8).

Rain Diva

There's nothing worse than spending all that money and time on a gorgeous blowout only to face the rain. The pros at Rain Diva "have spent years perfecting the ideal hat to specifically protect a woman's hair" from rain, according to their website. The hat has a protective pocket (called a snood) that folds under, allowing long hair to fit without compromising the style. Once your hair is secured in the Rain Diva, your blowout is completely protected.

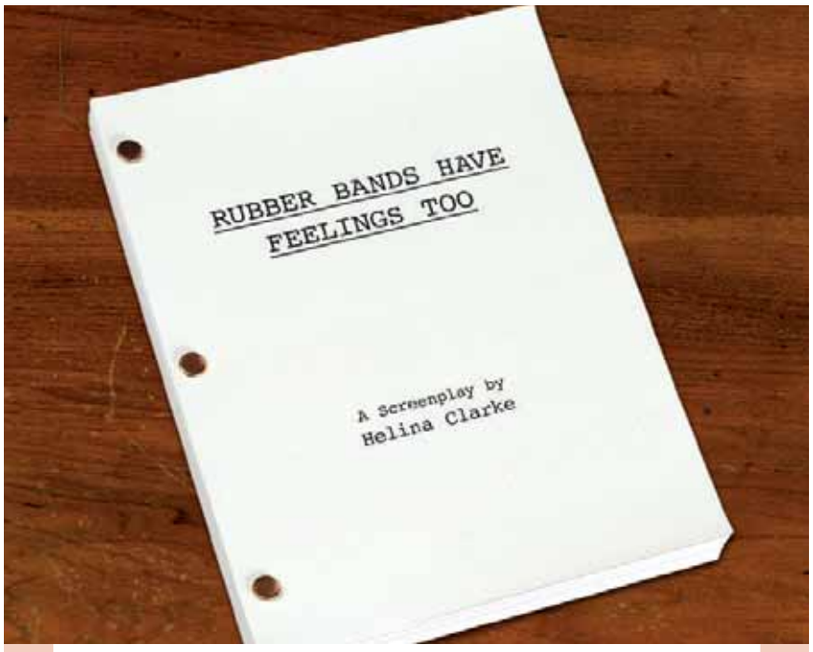
Blowout expert and founder of two Toronto-based blowout bars, called the Blow Dry Lounge, Beni Sicilia, who sells the product, says his clients "love them." They're available online, starting at $15.

The Morning After Shower Cap

One of Sicilia's best-selling products is the $20 Morning After Shower Cap. "They fit really well. Unlike most shower caps, the inner lining is all water proof, made out of flannel," so the hair doesn't stick to it, he explains. "It's tight around the forehead so no water can get in." Sicilia suggests to always take off the Shower Cap after you get out of the washroom, so no moisture gets to your hair.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Products on the market now can help protect your blowout for at least a week. GETTY IMAGES



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Truth in Advertising Matters. ASC Advertising Standards Canada adstandards.com/psa

SMOKING CESSATION

Running away from cigarettes

Jennifer Jeaurond had tried everything to kick her 23-year tobacco habit: hypnotherapy, the nicotine patch, a craving-reduction medication and even electronic cigarettes. Nothing worked.

That is until she signed up in 2013 for a 10-week smoking-cessation course in Ottawa, organized as a pilot study by the Canadian Cancer Society and the sporting goods retailer, the Running Room.

The idea of the Run to Quit program was to gradually wean participants off cigarettes as they increased physical fitness through a tailored course of walking and running at a Running Room store, coupled with a variety of support programs provided by the cancer society.

"What appealed to me was it wasn't like other smoking-cessation programs," Jeaurond, 40, said from her home in Aylmer, Que. "This one wasn't about abstinence, but rather it dealt with the addiction to smoking by introducing connections. It was connecting us with other smokers and connecting us with healthy people."

Attending the weekly Run to Quit sessions with other smokers made her feel not so alone as she struggled to overcome an addiction that had its roots in her first cigarette at age 14. She and several others in the class formed their own early-morning running group, motivating each other as they prepared for a five-kilometre race.

"You build healthy connections and therefore you don't need that chemical hook anymore," she said. "Because we fell in love with the sport of running, we could not keep up our habit of smoking."

TRY THE PROGRAM

Starting in mid-April, 21 Running Room locations across Canada will offer the 10-week Run To Quit program

So successful was the pilot study — 29 per cent of the almost 70 participants reported not smoking for the previous 30 days at a six-month followup — that the cancer society and Running Room are teaming up to provide the program over the next three years with a $4-million-plus grant from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Starting in mid-April, 21 Running Room locations in B.C., Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador will offer the 10-week program at a cost of $69 for in-person classes and $49 for an online, self-directed course that provides information on running and quitting through printed instruction, audio and video clips and even a virtual coach.

Next year, the program will extend to 50 store locations across the country and to 110 in 2018, said John Atkinson, who heads the Canadian Cancer Society's Smokers' Helpline.

Results from the Ottawa pilot also showed that at the six-month followup, 21 per cent of participants had maintained continuous abstinence from tobacco, while 50 per cent reported not having smoked for the previous seven days.

"These are considered very good results," said Atkinson, a former two-pack-a-day smoker who quit cold turkey 16 years ago when he joined a running group, after trying nine times to kick the habit without success.

"By joining an actual running group, it gave me a sense of accountability. I had a group of people that I got to know ... I'd agreed to do a five-kilometre run and I had made a commitment to myself and then got the camaraderie and friendship of others that kept me coming week after week. And also, I felt so good after I started to exercise. I felt great," said Atkinson, who completed the Boston Marathon last April and is preparing for Ottawa's marathon in May.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Pinning hopes on new ways to a new you

Welcome to New Year's resolution junction. It's a busy place around this time of year, when those promises we make to ourselves are either furiously alive or dead on arrival. Here's what Pinterest stats reveal about diet, recipe and workout ideas. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

BY THE NUMBERS

↓70%

The big crash in crash diets

For the first time, the site is seeing pinners ditch crash diets. Overall, pins related to crash diets were down 70 per cent in 2015 over the year before.

↓40%

PINTEREST/CAFE DELITES

Low-carb recipes dropped like hot potatoes

Pins of low-carb recipes have decreased by 40 per cent since last January.

↓32%

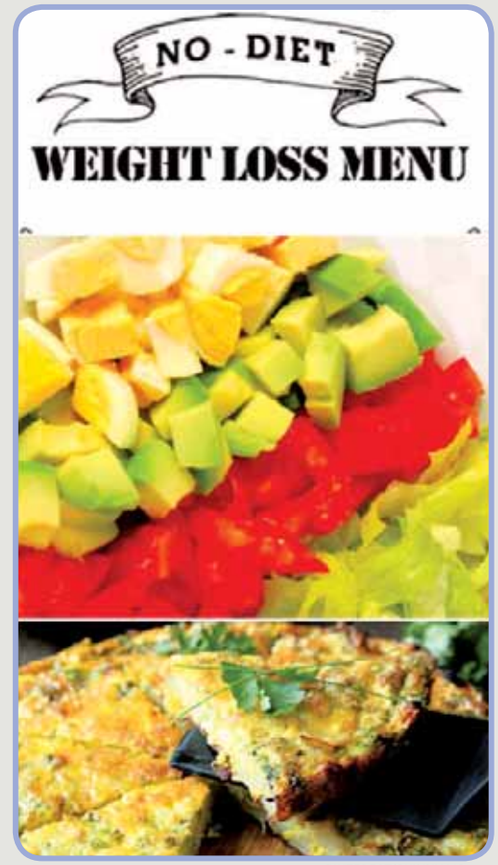
Pinning less faith on Paleo

Paleo diet pins were down 32 per cent, according to data supplied by Pinterest.

A MORE BALANCED APPROACH

In a little corner of the world we like to call Pinterest, resolution-makers have lit up with ways to declutter, eat healthier and de-stress.

"Over the last five years, we've seen the growth of more than 100 million special diet pins on Pinterest," offers Christine Schirmer, a spokeswoman for the site. "But in 2016, we see top health and fitness pins focus on a more balanced approach to well-being, including meditation, bullet journaling and minimalism."



PINTEREST/SKINNY MS.

↑83%

Hourglass workouts

Since Christmas, pins for "hourglass workout," a full-body approach hell bent on lean, sexy curves, increased 83 per cent.

PINTEREST/VOGUE

↑67%

Bullet journals

In the period between Christmas Eve and Jan. 2, pins for "bullet journals," which is a minimalist organizational notebooking system, increased 67 per cent, while "minimalist lifestyle" pinning in general went on the rise 19 per cent and those on the subject of decluttering rose 35 per cent.

PINTEREST/SUBLIME REFLECTION

MORE NEW YEAR, NEW YOU BOOSTS

- Trending: Jiu jitsu and its calorie-burning perks; pins on all things "holistic;" the "21-day fix," with guides for portion control, meal planning and clean eating.
- A 60 per cent bump for "detox tea" pins.
- A 41 per cent bump for "dry brushing," a DIY detox for the skin advocating the use of a brush on dry skin in a certain pattern before showering to help release the body's toxins.
- Pins for creating a "meditation space" have increased recently by 49 per cent.

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Actress Jennifer Lopez on the set of Shades of Blue in New York City. ZELIG SHAUL/ACE PICTURES

JLo shines in new police drama Shades of Blue

INTERVIEW

American Idol judge was daunted by dark series

Given her larger-than-life pop star persona, it's sometimes hard to remember that Jennifer Lopez also has acting chops.

There have been more than a few speed bumps along the way in her cannon (Gigli, The Boy Next Door) but the dark cop drama Shades of Blue is a reminder that the singer can still be a commanding screen presence, starring in perhaps her finest outing since she played a U.S. Marshall in Stephen Soderberg's Out of Sight.

In Shades of Blue Lopez plays a financially strapped single mother who is part of a group of corrupt New York City detectives. The show opens with a startling confession from her character, Harlee Santos. It then spirals into a nightmare world of wiretaps and deception. Lopez so thoroughly imbues her working class, down and out character, alternating between absolute command and stark vulnerability you forget that you just saw her on American Idol the day before.

"Right now in television it's like the best movies are on television," said Lopez at the Television Critics Association convention, explaining why she decided to produce and star in a gruelling TV series in addition to her packed schedule that includes a Las Vegas show and her stint on Idol.

"The characters are better. There is more of an opportunity to kind of really explore something. It was just a really exciting opportunity to do something that I hadn't done in a while in a different way than I had done in a long time."

The first few episodes of Shades of Blue (Thursdays on Global) are helmed by Academy Award winning director Barry Levinson (Rain Man, Diner, The Natural) so the series has a heightened cinematic feel.

> **Doing an hour drama is probably one of the hardest gigs in show business**
> Jennifer Lopez on her role

But it's not perfect. The plot is at times formulaic, and some of the miscues introduced into the show to move the storyline are heavy handed and amateurish. But Lopez plays off well against an aging, but still magnetic Ray Liotta (Goodfellas) as a corrupt police lieutenant who is trying to uproot the rat in his den of thieves.

Levinson, who is also a producer on the show, says he decided to work on the television series because of the "burst of creativity" in the medium.

"More and more talent from theatrical has now made the crossover. Television is now the place, and if you want to really do character work, that's not really existing theatrically anymore."

Broadcast networks have not had an easy time doing serialized drama, and Shades of Blue has darker themes that might have found a more comfortable home in cable, instead of a conventional broadcaster that has to appeal to a wider audience. But NBC decided they couldn't pass up the star-driven vehicle.

Lopez herself said she was a little daunted by the challenge of doing two gruelling TV shows at a time, where she had to film Shades during the week, and Idol on the weekends. She is also busy rehearsing for a three-year stint at Planet Hollywood in Las Vegas, premiering next week where she is contracted for 40 shows annually.

"It's nerve racking. Just doing the show itself was very challenging.

"Doing an hour drama is probably one of the hardest gigs in show business, and it's very demanding."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

JOHANNA SCHNELLER **WHAT I'M WATCHING**

Billions gives viewers their money's worth

THE SHOW: Billions, Season One, Episode Three (Showtime, Crave)
THE MOMENT: The Snack Cakes

Damian Lewis plays blue-collar billionaire Bobby "Axe" Axelrod in Billions. CONTRIBUTED

Sexy blue-collar billionaire Bobby "Axe" Axelrod (Damien Lewis) wants to take over a snack-cake company — as a scrappy kid, he saved up for the treats, but their quality has tanked. Snooty board members resist him, led by the owner's son. "Do you have any idea of the cost of returning to the original recipe?" Sonny sniffs. "We'll trim bloated executive compensation," Axe replies, menacingly.

Sonny blanches. "I earned my jet!" he says. "And the Scrumpets taste fine!"

"You raped the Scrumpet," Axe counters.

"I eat Scrumpets, and Dingdoodles, and Coconutties and they are good," Sonny huffs.

"They're not as good," Axe glowers.

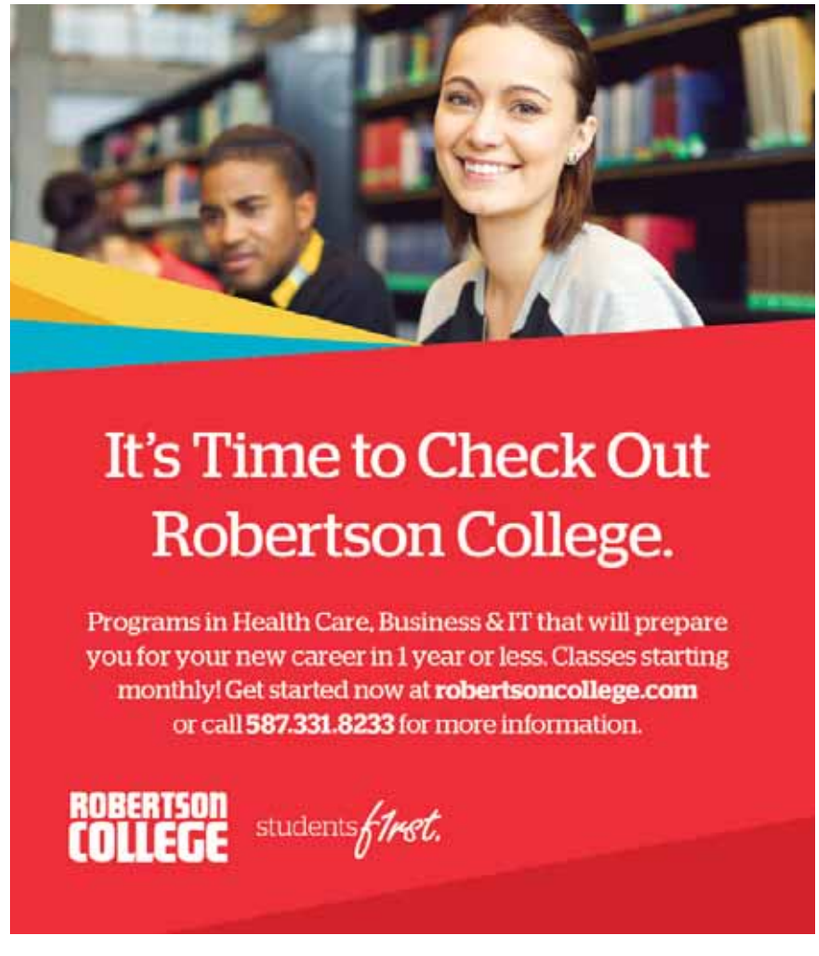
"But they're still very, very good!" Sonny's henchwoman chimes in nervously. "Delicious!"

At this moment, I realized with relief that Billions has a sense of humour. I'd feared it was just Dynasty with tattoos instead of shoulder pads. Paul Giamatti chews a lot of scenery as Chuck Rhoades, the U.S. Attorney who's determined to bring Axe down. Rhoades' wife Wendy (Maggie Siff) isn't exactly realistic — she's Axe's in-house motivational shrink, and oh yes, a dominatrix.

Once you settle in, though, there's much glossy fun to be had, because Billions hits the zeitgeist bullseye: the Super-Rich are our new Super Villains. Whether it's Robert Durst in The Jinx, or the decadent Royals, or the posh private-schoolers on American Crime, or the nasty Finney family on Ray Donovan, or Mimi (Marisa Tomei) scheming to take over Empire, the One Per Cent are the bad guys du jour.

Billions gives us our money's worth.

Johanna Schneller is a media connoisseur who zeroes in on pop-culture moments. She appears Monday through Thursday.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LegalAve offers a brand new resource

Free site brings family law to your fingertips

Family law is a complex subject. While there is a wealth of information available on the Internet, it can be hard to determine what's accurate, up-to-date and applicable to a particular situation under provincial law.

That's why the Alberta Legal Information Society (ALIS) has developed LegalAve.ca, an online resource where Albertans can access existing family law resources from different organizations throughout the province. Instead of scouring the web for materials about the law in Alberta, users can visit the site, which aims to organize the helpful, quality information and referrals needed all in one place.

"LegalAve provides people with a place to start in dealing with their family law issues," says Marsha Guthrie, interim leader for ALIS. "It offers a lot of in-depth, comprehensive information to help people understand the law as it pertains to their particular situation."

LegalAve does not provide legal advice. The website collects and presents public legal information from a variety of trusted sources including non-profit organizations, government agencies and some private organizations.

The LegalAve website lets you view a variety of resources — including brochures, videos, forms, reports, court cases and legislation — and save them to your personal list so you can review them again later. You can also email information to another person, which is useful for people who may be helping someone else with a legal problem.

"It's important to know your options and what to expect from the legal system," Guthrie says. "We encourage people to take their time to browse the site and to read and understand all the information presented."

There are three different ways to use LegalAve. The first way is to click on the blue "Start Here" button to use the "Guided Pathway" that asks a series of questions. Answer "Yes," "No" or "I'm not sure" to receive more information about the law, the legal processes, common questions and myths related to the answers given. This is the best option for those who don't know where to start. The Guided Pathway is currently available in six languages and five more will be added soon.

Secondly, users can find the search bar in the top-right corner on every page and type in keywords (such as divorce, child support or family violence) to get more information.

The third option is to click the "Legal Topics" menu bar to browse the site's five family law topics.

LegalAve provides legal information and links to legal resources about family law in five distinct categories: Starting new family relationships, issues in ongoing family relationships, breakdown in family relationships, family violence or solving family law problems.

ISTOCK

The website is also helpful for service providers who are looking for information to help a client.

Learn more at www.LegalAve.ca.

Need legal info on the go? There's an app for that

A newly-created app from LegalAve is offering Albertans more ways to get the legal information they need, whether from a smartphone, a tablet or another mobile device.

Users can download the free app for Android on Google Play or for iOS on iTunes and App Store, and instantly get access to a number of helpful features to get information about the law and the legal system in Alberta.

The new app will provide answers to common questions and help dispel common myths about family law in Alberta.

When you use the "Guided Pathway," a step-by-step tool that points you to relevant legal information and resources based on your answers to a series of questions, you can save your responses or email them to yourself in order to pick up where you left off later on.

Download the app and follow the LegalAve project on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn for more information.

"Violence is never the answer, but sometimes it is": Matt Barnes was fined $35K for comments regarding Knicks coach Derek Fisher

'Big Mo' elevates Panthers

NFL PLAYOFFS

Newton and Co. hold off Seahawks after big first half

Four games into his playoff career, Cam Newton recognizes the key element to success. He calls it "Big Mo," and there couldn't have been a better example than Carolina's 31-24 victory over Seattle on Sunday.

Emphatically backing up their superb regular season with one of the most dominating halves in football history, the Panthers then hung on in the face of a furious Seahawks rally before surviving.

"The playoffs bring out more than any other time the impact of 'Big Mo,'" Newton said after Carolina (16-1) moved into the NFC title game, which they will host next Sunday against Arizona (13-3). "Momentum. "We can't wait for no one to make plays for us."

The Panthers, winners of 12 straight at home, made all the right plays in building a 31-0 lead, then were dominated by the two-time defending NFC champs in the second half. So if Carolina wins its first NFL championship, it can credit the lesson learned from the Seahawks (11-7).

"We have to find a way to complete a full game of football," Newton said. "We have been known to take our foot off the throttle and we have to find that killer instinct."

The All-Pro quarterback noted how players, coaches and even the fans were feeling the pressure in the final 30 minutes as Seattle staged a relentless comeback.

"It was a tale of execution. We needed a little more of that in the second half. You just have to find ways to get your groove back on."

Definitely.

"That's what this game is going to teach us," said All-Pro linebacker Luke Kuechly, who returned a first-quarter interception for a touchdown. "No matter how good you play in the first half, the second half is just as important."

Jonathan Stewart, returning from a foot injury, scored two touchdowns after jump-starting the Panthers with a 59-yard sprint on their first play. Newton threw for a touchdown.

Then, Seattle showed its pedigree and climbed back within seven points.

"We made a mess of it in the first half," Seahawks coach Pete Carroll said. "We look at this game as a microcosm of the season. We struggled so much early in the season to get going, and it took us a long time. When we finally did, we caught fire, and got rolling. Everyone in here just feels like we ran out of time."

Seattle got back into it as Russell Wilson threw for three touchdowns, two to Jermaine Kearse. An onside kick with 1:11 remaining, however, was recovered by Panthers linebacker Thomas Davis. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Panthers running back Jonathan Stewart reaches across the goal-line to score a touchdown against the Seahawks on Sunday. STREETER LECKA/GETTY IMAGES

SUNDAY In Charlotte

31	24

NFL PLAYOFFS

Broncos set up matchup vs. Pats

SUNDAY In Denver

23	16
BRONCOS	STEELERS

Peyton Manning rescued the butterfingered Broncos with a late touchdown drive and Denver advanced to the AFC championship game with a 23-16 win over Ben Roethlisberger and the Pittsburgh Steelers on Sunday.

The Broncos (13-4) will host Tom Brady and the New England Patriots (13-4) next weekend.

With Denver down 13-12 with less than 10 minutes left, cornerback Bradley Roby punched the ball from Fitzgerald Toussaint's arms and teammate DeMarcus Ware recovered at the Denver 35-yard line.

Then, Manning went to work, driving Denver to its only touchdown.

C.J. Anderson ran it in from the 1, and Demaryius Thomas caught the two-point conversion for a 20-13 lead with three minutes remaining.

Ware's sack ended Pittsburgh's next drive and Brandon McManus kicked his fifth field goal, tying the NFL playoff record.

Chris Boswell made a 47-yarder with 19 seconds left, but Anderson recovered the onside kick. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NHL

Canucks stay afloat thanks to Miller

Ryan Miller made 47 saves and Radim Vrbata scored in the shootout, leading the Vancouver Canucks to a 2-1 win over the New York Islanders on Sunday.

Ben Hutton scored for the Canucks in regulation.

Despite receiving a 25-save effort from Jaroslav Halak, the Islanders' fell to 24-15-6 as their two-game winning streak came to an end.

Ryan Strome scored for New York. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ryan Miller stopped 47 shots for the Canucks. GETTY IMAGES

IN BRIEF

Bolts beat interstate rival

Nikita Kucherov had two goals and the Tampa Bay Lightning extended a season-high winning streak to five games by beating the Atlantic Division-leading Florida Panthers 3-1 on Sunday night.

Andrej Sustr had the other Tampa Bay goal and Ben Bishop made 26 saves to help the Lightning move within five points of Florida.

Nick Bjugstad scored for the Panthers.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ledecky records PB in dominating 200-metre free

Katie Ledecky dominated an impressive field in the women's 200-metre freestyle at the Arena Pro Swim Series as the teenager and 2015 world champion ramps up for the summer Olympics in Brazil.

The 18-year-old Ledecky finished in personal-best one minute, 54.43 seconds Saturday night to beat Sweden's Sarah Sjostrom, who had the fastest time in the world last year.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TENNIS

ATP boss denies coverup of scam

ATP chairman Chris Kermode and the Tennis Integrity United have rejected news reports that match-fixing has gone unchecked in the sport.

In reports published on the morning the Australian Open began, the BBC and BuzzFeed News said secret files exposed evidence of widespread suspected match-fixing at the top level of world tennis.

On Monday, Kermode said officials "absolutely reject any suggestion that evidence of match-fixing has been suppressed for any reason, or isn't being investigated."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

16

The report said that in the last decade 16 unnamed players have been repeatedly flagged to the integrity unit.

When good isn't great enough

NBA

Success will be defined this spring, Raptors say

They are on pace to win more games in a season than any team in franchise history; there is reason to believe they will have two players voted to the all-star team for the first time ever, a measure of respect never before afforded the Toronto Raptors.

They rank in the top 10 in both defensive and offensive efficiency; they are led by the most successful coach they have ever employed, one who has won more than 132 games over the last 2-1/2 seasons.

They have withstood the loss of their starting centre for about half their games; their key free-agent acquisition is recovering from knee surgery and really hasn't been himself even when he has been on the court.

They are about to begin a schedule-friendly stretch of seven games at home; they are ensconced in second place in the conference and there is no reason to think they won't maintain that unprecedented level.

If the Raptors were another local sports team — perhaps one that plays a game on ice — there would be flags adorning almost every car on the road as they hit the midway point of the regular season.

But despite all that — and it is impressive where the Raptors are today — the playoff failings of the past are foremost in their minds.

Being 25-15 is nice, but having four wins after the first round of the playoffs is what matters.

"We've lost games where we had opportunities to win, we've lost ones we've pretty much given away but we've got ourselves in a positive position in the conference and in our division," Patrick Patterson said Sunday. "We have to improve on defence, running guys off the three-point line and in transition and also just being a bit more solid and together on the offensive end."

The promise going into the season's second half rests mainly on the strides taken in the first. Yes, there have been deficiencies but they have been overcome often enough to have reason for continued optimism.

"We're 28th in giving up three-point percentage against us, so that's an area," coach Dwane Casey said. "But also we're No. 4 in the league in protecting the paint, No. 2 in the league in protecting the rim."

As for the big picture? "We want to have ourselves in a comfortable position," Patterson said, "and not have to battle or claw our way into the position we want."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

> **We're doing some good things, but there's always areas as a team ... that you can get better at.**
> Dwane Casey

After last week's game in London, the Raptors return to a more familiar routine this week starting Monday night when they host the Nets. GREGORY SHAMUS/NBAE VIA GETTY IMAGES

PREMIER LEAGUE

United sparks title talk with latest win

Manchester United relied on brilliant goalkeeping by David de Gea and a late, opportunistic finish by Wayne Rooney to snatch a 1-0 win at great rival Liverpool on Sunday, sparking talk of an unlikely run at the Premier League title.

With Arsenal only drawing 0-0 at Stoke a few hours later to return to first place on goal difference above Leicester, United trimmed the gap to the leaders to seven points.

Talk of United even challenging for the title would been dismissed as fanciful at the end of 2015, when the team was on an eight-game winless run and manager Louis van Gaal's future looked precarious.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

> **When the gap is like this, seven points, you can overcome that.**
> Louis van Gaal, Man United manager

IN BRIEF

Messi leaves midway through Barça blowout

Lionel Messi was substituted at halftime of Barcelona's 6-0 rout of 10-man Athletic Bilbao after suffering what Barcelona coach Luis Enrique called a "slight pain" on Sunday.

Messi showed no signs of being slowed down as he helped Barcelona build a 2-0 lead after opening the scoring with a penalty in the seventh minute.

Luis Enrique replaced the Argentina playmaker with Arda Turan, saying later it was done as a precaution.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Spurs still perfect at home

LaMarcus Aldridge scored 23 points and the San Antonio Spurs received an early spark from Jonathon Simmons to beat the Dallas Mavericks 112-83 on Sunday night and remain undefeated at home.

The Spurs are a franchise-best 24-0 at home to open the season and have won 33 straight at the AT&T Center dating back to March 2015.

San Antonio matched its best start after 42 games, tying the mark set in 2010-11.

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PLAY Friday's Answers

from your daily crossword and Sudoku

9	2	4	7	5	6	1	8	3
3	5	6	9	1	8	2	7	4
8	1	7	4	3	2	9	6	5
7	3	9	5	2	1	8	4	6
1	4	8	3	6	7	5	9	2
5	6	2	8	4	9	7	3	1
2	7	3	6	8	5	4	1	9
6	8	1	2	9	4	3	5	7
4	9	5	1	7	3	6	2	8

for more fun and games go to metronews.ca/games

RECIPE Crunchy Tofu

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

Embrace meatless Monday with these crunchy tofu "steaks." Enjoyed with some stir-fried veggies, you'll be feeling virtuous and satisfied.

Ready in
Total time: 30 minutes
Serves 4

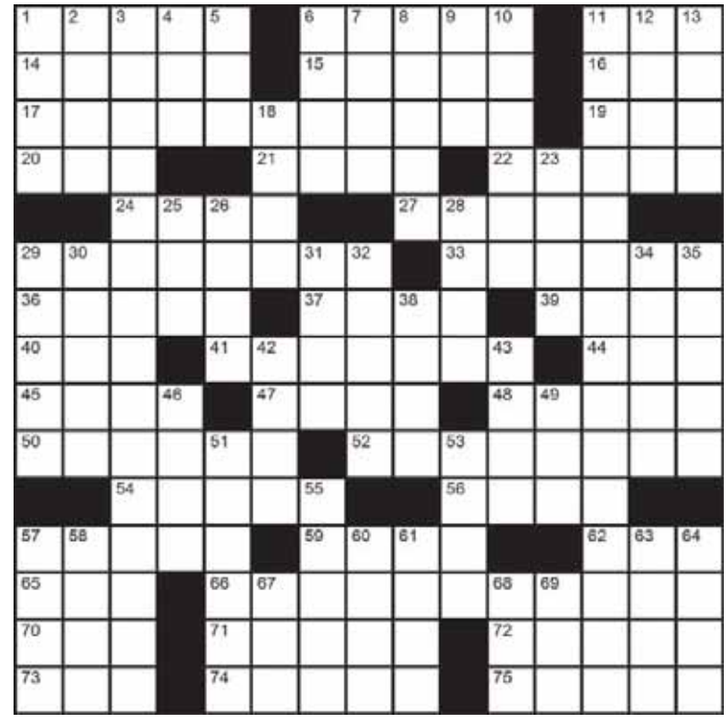
Ingredients
- 1 block of firm tofu
- 1 egg
- 3/4 cups panko breadcrumbs
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 Tbsp vegetable oil

Directions
1. Unwrap your tofu and place it on its side (the long, thin side) on a cutting board. Slice it in half so that you have 2 (now thinner) rectangles. Cut each rectangle in half, leaving you with 4 squares. Now cut each square in half diagonally and you'll have 8 triangles.
2. Whisk the egg in a shallow bowl. Pour the panko breadcrumbs out onto a plate. Add salt and pepper, toss to combine and then spread it out flat. Have a clean plate handy.
3. Dip each piece of tofu into the egg and coat completely. Then dredge the coated tofu in the breadcrumbs so it gets covered on every side. Place your coated tofu on the clean plate. Repeat until each piece of tofu is covered.
4. Heat up the vegetable oil in a skillet over medium high heat. Place half of your tofu pieces in the pan and let them get brown and crispy, about 2 or 3 minutes. Gently flip over and cook. Use a spatula to help turn them over onto sides to brown.
5. Serve with rice and mixed vegetables.

FOR MORE MEAL IDEAS, VISIT SWEETPOTATOCHRONICLES.COM

CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Irks
6. Falcon-headed god of ancient Egypt
11. Pinafore's letters in opera circles
14. Abraham's offering to God
15. Spew
16. Deuce-ace, fancy-style
17. Canadian singer/songwriter starring in the 2006 documentary "Escarpment Blues": 2 wds.
19. In-a-row letters
20. Valley, in Wales
21. Concept
22. Stan's comedy partner, cute-style
24. Gael, for one
27. Sporty shirts
29. Reacts with emotion, perhaps at an awards presentation: 2 wds.
33. Mottle
36. Brawny blokes
37. Mini message
39. Deanna _ (Counselor on "Star Trek: The Next Generation")
40. Tree variety
41. Question/interview post-mission
44. Stop
45. Grad
47. Churn
48. Vassal
50. Small horses
52. Song by #17-Across that goes "You sang to the moon / In the great black night..."
54. Deduce
56. Poetic foot
57. Recurring theme
59. _ Bator, Mongolia
62. Volcano of Hawaii, Mauna _
65. Yalie
66. 9 to 5 is when we're here for business, in other words
70. Whopper
71. Awaken
72. "_ Gold" (1997)
73. Lively parties
74. Checks
75. Alberta town est. 1911

DOWN
1. Assorted [abbr.]
2. "_ Her Standing There" by The Beatles
3. They are where food is grown across this great land: 2 wds.
4. American flight watchdog org.
5. Teacher's workplace, for short
6. Mr. Potato _
7. Shrek, for one
8. Update a route
9. Function
10. Leisurely walk
11. Emmy-winning police drama of 1981 to 1987: 3 wds.
12. Ms. Kuzyk (Winnipeg-born actress in the role of Det. Patsy Mayo on #11-Down)
13. British Columbia's motto, 'Splendor _ Occasu' (Splendour without diminishment)
18. Lennon-McCartney successes
23. Ransack
25. Get by, but barely
26. _ a hand
28. Hautbois
29. Inexpensive
30. Celebrities/royalty magazine!
31. Shield's centre knob
32. Danger
34. Miami Sound Machine tune
35. Stowaway, say
38. Venus de _ (Ancient statue)
42. Highlands tongue
43. One-named rock bassist
46. Skirt style
49. Suffix with 'Ideal'
51. Exertion
53. Sup
55. Singer/pianist Mr. Wainwright
57. Combine
58. Varied mixture
60. Itemize
61. Treads the boards
63. Sweet sandwichy treat with milk
64. Formal gr.
67. Good, to Evil
68. Tint
69. Former

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS by Sally Brompton

Aries March 21 - April 20
Try to relax this week. Keep a sense of perspective and remember that no matter how hard you try to get ahead it's the personal side of life that matters most.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
You may not have a choice about what you have to do today but you do have a choice about how to do it. Do a good job and you'll be rewarded with more enjoyable tasks.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
Love will come back into your life over the next few weeks — and you will feel more in tune with the world around you. Don't wait for others to tell you how much they care — tell them how much you care first.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
If your body is sending you signals that it could do with a rest then you must heed the call. Not even a Cancer can keep up the relentless pace of the past few weeks. If you fall behind in your schedule, that's too bad.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
No matter how many challenges you took on in recent weeks you came through them all unscathed. Your efforts were not in vain. The universe rewards those who strive.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Make an effort to see things from a partner's point of view. You'll get valuable insight into their personality, enabling you to make allowances for their behaviour in the future.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Changes are inevitable but the good news is they will work in your favour. It may be annoying that travel and social plans have to be changed at the last minute but you can easily make new arrangements. Be flexible.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
You'll be pleasantly surprised by what happens today. Money matters will no longer worry but don't go mad and go on a spree because that will cause trouble all over again.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Focus on the things that are still going well for you rather than the things that may go wrong. You have lots to look forward to, so think positive and positive things will occur.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You won't be able to hide or disguise your feelings much longer, and nor should you want to. It will be easy for you to let certain people know what you really think of them — not a lot it seems!

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
No matter how reserved you may be usually, over the coming week you will leave those around you in no doubt about what you think and feel. It could get emotional!

Pisces Feb. 20 - March 20
You'll find it easier to get along with employers and authority figures over the next few days, even those you have clashed with recently. There will be more respect going both ways.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

		3				7		
9			2		8			3
	2		3	1	7		6	
		5				9		
7		2				5		4
	9	6				8	1	
		4				3		
	5		1	3	2		4	
	6						8	

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HEALTHY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MENTAL HEALTH STUDY

- Are you aged between 12 and 30? AND
- Want to contribute to research that may help young people with mental health concerns in the future?

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This study has been approved by the Conjoint Health Research Ethics board Ethics ID: REB14-1710

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